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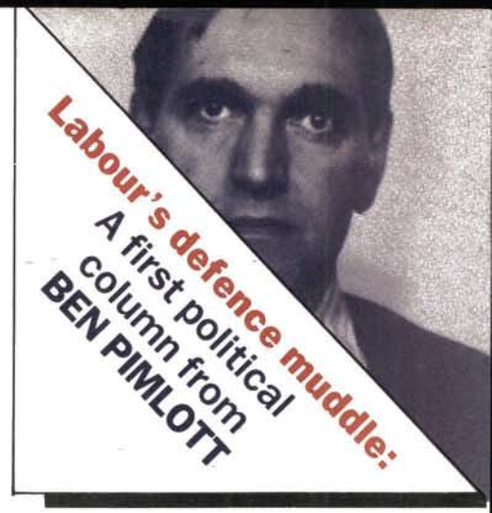
STATESMAN

- Chesshyre on Fleet St diaspora
- Straw on markets
- Nicaragua fights on
- A French way with crime
- Zygmunt Bauman: art in the marketplace



Labour's defence muddle: A first political column from **BEN PIMLOTT**

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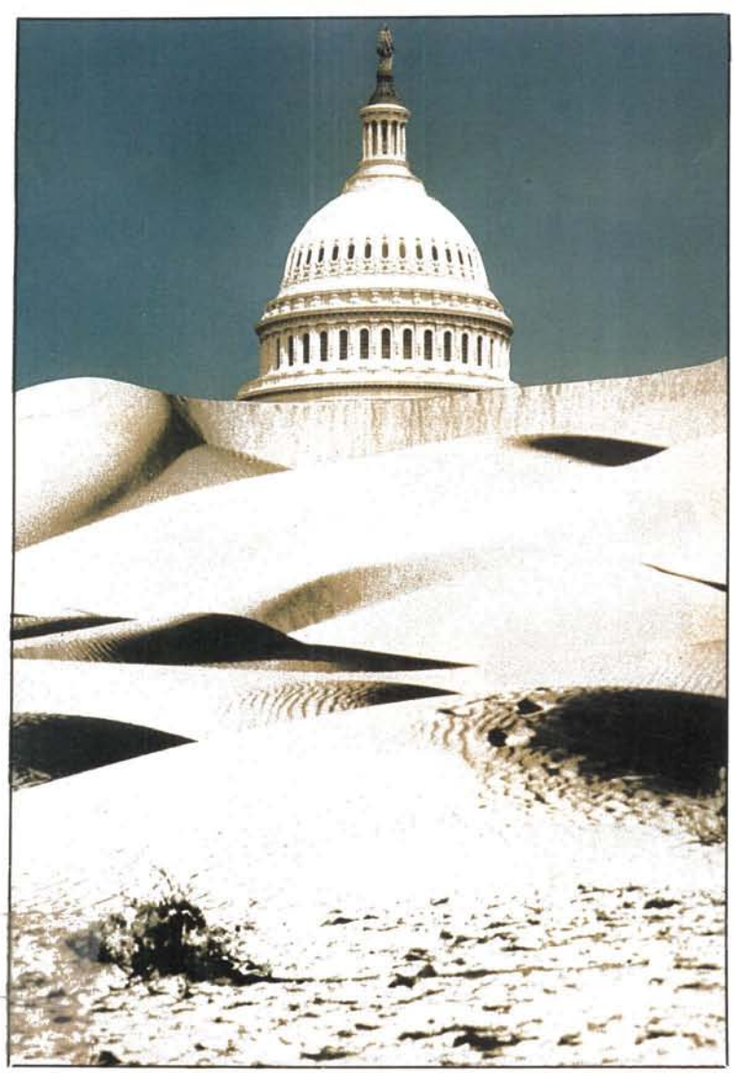

Cover montage: Michael Bennett

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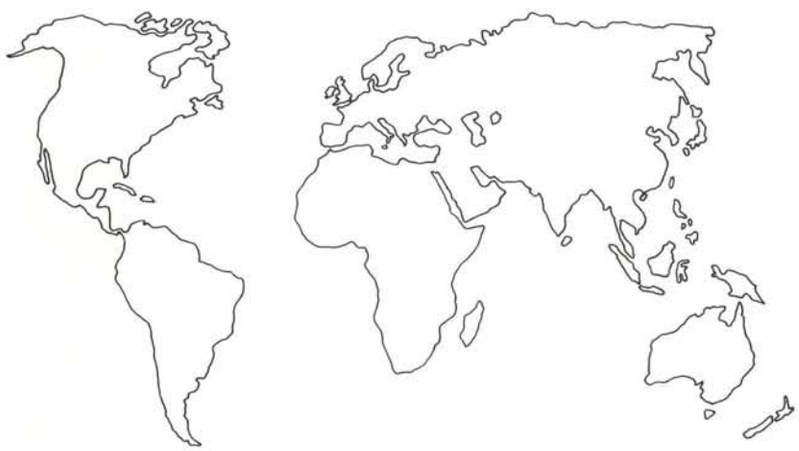
Those countries ahead of Britain in pharmaceutical research are shaded red.



It's no accident that all three of the world's best-selling medicines were developed in the UK.

After all, one pound in every ten spent world-wide on pharmaceutical research is spent in the United Kingdom by British-based companies.

In fact, the industry devotes more of its earnings to research and development than any other in this country.

And judging by our £850 million trade surplus in medicines, this certainly helps to keep Britain in the pink.

THE BRITISH PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY.
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NEW STATESMAN

Vol 114 No 2952 23 October 1987

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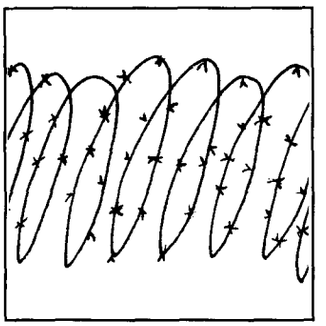
The 'pieces'



TELEVISION is now ritually abused by a legion of punk moralists who know better than we do what we should watch. Among the most unctuous and assiduous of these is Gerald Howarth, Conservative MP for Cannock and Burntwood, who has called for resignations if Channel Four fulfils its present intention to broadcast the poem 'v.' by Tony Harrison on 4 November at 11pm.

The poem takes its 'inspiration' from the poet's shock at seeing the gravestone of his parents desecrated by aerosol slogans. In one passage of the poem, he has a desecrator talking:

> 'Aspirations, cunt! folk on t'fucking dole
> 'ave got about as much scope to aspire
> above the shit they're dumped in, cunt, as coal
> aspires to be chucked on t'fucking fire.
>
> 'Yer've given yerself toffee, cunt. Who needs
> yer fucking poufy words. Ah write mi own.
> Ah've got mi work on show all over Leeds
> Like this UNITED here on some sod's stone'.

You see the point of it. Harrison is mimicking the constant reiteration of words — words Lawrence and others have tried to save for tenderness — used as verbal daggers, a usage which has now become street language. Without such passages, the poem would be something of an abstraction. 'The poem is a threnody,' said Bernard Levin, in an acute review of the imbroglio in Monday's *Times*, 'for his [Harrison's] dead parents, for the "skins" who have deadened themselves, for all the wasted hopes of the world.'

What, then, are Mr Howarth, and Mrs Mary Whitehouse, and the rest of the gang who would be our censors to make of *Shoah? Shoah* is a film of nearly ten hours' length, broadcast by Channel Four on Sunday and Monday night of this past week. It contained the deepest obscenities imaginable. It had a former SS guard describe how women shat uncontrollably as they waited to be gassed. It had former camp inmates talk of fathers crushing their sons' heads underfoot as they climbed higher on a mound of bodies to gasp a few seconds more air before the zyklon gas choked them, too. It showed a man describe how he threw his dead wife and daughter into a pit of bodies — not all dead — then plead for a death which was denied.

To watch *Shoah* from start to finish was to feel a creeping horror, composed of a thousand details which poured from the mouths, and the expressions, and even the silences of the witnesses whom the film's director, Claude Lansmann, had assembled in his decade-long odyssey to make it. Polish farmworkers who would walk beside the lines of cattle trucks waiting with their starving and parched human cargos outside Treblinka and Sobibor, and draw their fingers across their throats in the international language which says: 'You've had it.' Did they do it to warn or to gloat? The evidence of their eyes and lips often seemed in contradiction.

Again and again, a sub-theme asserted itself: that of the language used. A former member of the (Jewish) work detail in Treblinka said that the SS guards would punish anyone who referred to the victims *as* victims, or even as corpses. Instead, the approved words were 'figuren' — puppets — or 'stücke' — pieces. The identity cards of those who were designated for immediate gassing on arrival at the camps — most of the Jews — were stamped 'SB' — 'sonderbehandlung', or special treatment. A memorandum from the SS to the manufacturers of gas trucks used for extermination before gas chambers were built gives a detailed list of improvements sought without once betraying what the 'operations' conducted within the trucks were. There was, said Raul Hilberg, a historian of the Holocaust, no document, no order, which said unambiguously: exterminate the Jews. The SS financed it with money and valuables taken from the Jews — they paid for their own annihilation. The whole vast operation, its logistics, its personnel, its technology, was conducted below the level of explicit language.

Lansmann raises it to an explicit level. His cameras focus on the faces telling the stories: on the steam trains still in use today, shuttling to and fro across the lines and sidings used to transport the 'stücke' to their 'new homes'. On the fields and forests of Upper Silesia which bore mute witness to the frantic galloping, pursued by whips and clubs, of the victims from station ramp to oven. Again and again Lansmann would insist on this question: 'How was it done?' How did they get the train up to the ramp? How long to unload it? How many loads a day? How were the crews recruited? Were they paid extra? (yes — in liquor). Who signed the orders? Who paid? Who knew?

There is nothing in our collective experience, especially of those of us born after war in the West, which prepares us to understand the subject matter of *Shoah*. It can thus only be conveyed to our imaginations and tested on our moral senses. It could teach no lesson beyond its own practice: that only by an explicit understanding of the worst is there hope of breaking history's most malign cycles. Only by knowing what large and small obscenities look like and read like will we know what is, and what is not, obscene.

John Lloyd

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DIARY

Keswick

A nun I know, C of E, lives in Keswick. She is the sort who used to pray for Tony Benn, that he might keep his principles. For all I know she still does — he has, hasn't he? My friend the nun writes letters to foreign governments on the list of Amnesty International. After Chernobyl, she and the other sisters did a whip-round and sent a contribution to the Chernobyl relief fund. Along with the cheque she sent a long letter.

It is to this letter that I point you. It expressed, of course, the usual: sorrow at the calamity, hope, it apologised that so many Westerners had been so hostile immediately after the disaster, explaining that fear, not unChristian hearts had motivated the hostility. My friend the nun remarked too that *glasnost* was much welcome and much appreciated and would be even better appreciated and responded to if the Soviets were to free Irina Ratushinskaya.

Two days later they did.

Mrs Thatcher got the credit.

○

The Lake District is rather wetter than the Sahara. My boots had served me well in the sands of Morocco, but were not all that they should be on the fells. I watched with envy as our guide Frank Harrison, an ex-schoolmaster, walked resolutely in every puddle we passed. The puddles were many and deep. His socks remained dry. He sang an aria from *Boris Gudonov*.

Frank was shod in boots of leather and goretex, a newish waterproof fabric. The boots had been designed by Dennis Pattinson, a Cumbrian of a certain age, who had sold his first shoes at the age of 14. The idea of buying Pattinson boots from Mr Pattinson at Pattinson's shoeshop in Keswick appealed to me. Goretex appealed to me: I have never lost the American bias in favour of new materials. And my feet were wet. I went into the shop determined to buy a pair.

The boots just did not fit.

Mr Pattinson seemed to think it was my American obstinacy, not my foot, that stood in the way of a sale. One member of our party, well brought up and British, did buy a pair, which not only saved the day, they fit. The next day she and Frank walked resolutely in every puddle we passed. Their socks remained dry.

Perhaps just as well. Two charges against Express Foods Group Ltd for causing pollution to the River Eden were committed to Crown Court by magistrates. Allegedly, Express has caused trade effluent ammonium hydroxide to flow into a tributary of the river at the Creamery, Appleby, and then into the Eden to such an extent that fish were poisoned.

All's not well with the land either. Sheep no longer are so awfully radioactive, but property prices have not recovered from the Chernobyl fall-out. And the EEC sheep war is hotting up. The Agriculture Minister John MacGregor, who lists conjuring as one of his hobbies, may have to turn to it to make farmers smile. Dour they are at the best of times and these are the worst.

Even the foxhounds are frustrated. In Ullswater, there are poor scenting conditions in the bracken which is drying off slowly. (I'll say.) The *Lake District Herald* runs a lengthy hunting review written by one 'Duchess'. Said review is rather like the theatre reviews in the nationals, outlining the plot of the hunt, highlighting the drama. Last week, according to the *Herald*, the doughty dogs 'managed to account for' two foxes. I will not got into further detail, although Duchess does, lest I give away the ending.

○

Sir Thomas Jackson is one of the many Cumbrian farmers who is damned irked at the EEC's plan to limit the numbers of sheep Britons breed. Aside from the fact that fewer sheep means less money in the farmer's pocket, there is the principle of the thing. Says Sir Thomas: 'By allowing quotas to be introduced we would be handing over our birthright to continentals.'

Unthinkable, chaps.

Quite acceptable, though, is the selling off of titles. On instruction of the Duke of Newcastle, the Marquess of Cholmondeley, the Earl of Carlisle and others, 44 lordships of the manor are being sold next week to whomever.

○

Then there was the gingerbread saga. Grasmere is not just Wordsworth country. There is a tiny shop by the church, originally the village school (1660-1854), where each day for the past 130 years the famous 'original celebrated Grasmere gingerbread' has been baked from Sarah Nelson's secret recipe. Mrs Nelson learned to bake the stuff from cook while in service. Her descendants ever after had their work cut out for them.

But last March a large, inviting shop just a bit down the road began to sell gingerbread. It claimed it was 'original' and that the recipe went back 150 years.

Some of the American tourists, who come on lightning visits in between a morning in Chester and an afternoon in Edinburgh, are flocking to the upstart.

The young Northerner in shirtsleeves and bowler I spoke to at the upstart establishment insisted they had been making gingerbread for 150 years and it was only the most stealthy investigative journalism that made him, an honest lad, confirm that they had not been making it on those premises.

The case has gone to law.

So much for mayhem.

○

Murder, thank heavens, is all that is drawing John Stalker to the Lakes. A pity I couldn't stay on for the arrival of the former deputy chief constable of Manchester who is coming specially for a Murder Mystery Weekend at the Derwentwater Hotel. The hotel has done it twice before. 'It was a bit awkward when all the guests weren't involved, as we had tell them not to be worried if they heard screams or shooting,' says the assistant manager. This time they hope, at last, to get it right. Each guest has a part to play. Stalker will be offering counsel as to who dunnit. Someone else will be told when where and how to die.

○

After seven fine days of walking, I wiped the mud from my new Italian leather boots. The train ride to London took nearly eight hours. On Monday morning it was lunch at the Savoy, where they were celebrating the publication of the *Guinness Book of Records*. I met an American who had published the fastest book — it was about the Royal Wedding — and an East Ender who manufacturered the largest drum.

Adrianne Blue

Adrianne Blue's book, Grace Under Pressure: The Emergence of Women in Sport *(Sidgwick & Jackson, £10.95), is published on 5 November.*

ROGER WODDIS

The White Ma'am's Burden

'Thatcher hits back in row on sanctions.' — The Times *headline*

Take up the White Ma'am's burden —
  Support her fearless lead —
Go drive the rest to fury
  Who are a lesser breed;
Dismiss the backward nations,
  The primitive and wild,
And treat them as a nanny
  Would treat a wayward child.

Take up the White Ma'am's burden —
  The only one in step
Some call a demi-goddess,
  And some a demirep;
To press for further sanctions,
  Which she alone attacks,
Would damage our investments —
  Correction — harm the blacks.

Take up the White Ma'am's burden —
  The heavy load that pays —
Denounce Mandela's 'terror'
  To warrant Botha's praise;
And be prepared to swallow,
  Through seeming now so brave,
The verdict of tomorrow,
  The judgment of the slave.

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The price of freedom

Johannesburg

THE SOUTH AFRICAN government and the country's big business establishment have had a good few weeks. As the world's financial markets crashed early in the week, the price of gold — South Africa's staple commodity — shot up, making the Johannesburg stock exchange a beneficiary of the international collapse and a tempting alternative for foreign investors.

A few days earlier — to the delight of the government and big business — Margaret Thatcher went in to bat for them, lambasting the African National Congress and ensuring that the Commonwealth would not be able to impose more effective sanctions.

The gold price-led South African economy is recovering on the back of the Gulf War and international recession. The international sanctions movement is staggering to maintain momentum at its most critical juncture: the need to move beyond barely effective piecemeal measures to comprehensive sanctions which bite.

Theoretically, sanctions could really hurt the South African economy. The oil embargo has cost Pretoria more than 20 billion Rand extra during the past two decades. In a speech to the Natal National Party last week, South Africa's finance minister, Barend du Plessis, said the effects of boycotts and sanctions on the country's economy could not be underestimated.

A study by the West German Starnberger Institute released recently found that by wielding effective sanctions, a small group of only six nations could cripple the South African economy. 'A refusal to roll over South African loans, together with a ban on new money, would swiftly push South Africa into international insolvency and provoke a capital flight, leading to a fiscal crisis of state, a cessation of investment and an exodus of business people and experts.'

A Swiss diplomat commented that while the idea was a sound one, the countries involved — the US, Britain, West Germany, Japan, Switzerland and France — were unlikely to impose such measures. Without the will, the theory collapses.

Besides, a year after the United States Congress imposed tough sanctions on Pretoria, pro-sanctions groups such as the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) are acknowledging that anything less than total sanctions doesn't look like working. First, the economic impact of sanctions to date has been dubious. The second stage in the argument — that economic pressure will force the government to its knees and thus to the negotiating table — is even more dubious, given the right-wing backlash that sanctions has unleashed.

Pretoria has a pathologically self-righteous need to assert its defiance against international pressure. Increasingly snubbed by its traditional trading partners in the West (with the crucial exceptions of Britain and West Germany) South Africa has looked eastward, boosting its trade with countries such as Taiwan and Japan, which is set to become South Africa's major trading partner. Trade between the two countries increased by 25 per cent during 1986.

At a conference in Johannesburg three weeks ago it was revealed that trade between South Africa and Taiwan increased 54 per cent last year. Delegates predicted it would rise to a total of $2 billion by 1990 without the danger of 'anti-apartheid pressure' in Taiwan.

This is but one of the unintended consequences of sanctions and disinvestment. Others include the fact that white South African companies such as Anglo American have bought out disinvesting British and American companies for bargain prices, and that Western hostility has driven the white public into an even more intransigent mood.

Black attitudes, on the other hand, appear firmly in favour of sanctions. In July COSATU moved from hesitant backing for economic pressures to a call for mandatory sanctions and for the total withdrawal of foreign companies. Last week the United Democratic Front lambasted Thatcher and said: 'We are totally unimpressed by arguments that sanctions and economic pressure against the regime will cause more suffering to the majority. On the contrary, failure to take direct action is the surest way to the regime and to prolong the hardships of the people of South Africa.'

A survey conducted during August and September by the independent Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) found that two-thirds of blacks favoured sanctions for radical political ends. The survey — which for the first time included people in the rural areas — found that out of a sample of 800 respondents, 46 per cent said sanctions should be applied until the South African government lifted the State of Emergency, freed political prisoners, unbanned political organisations and abandoned apartheid. A further 21 per cent supported 'an even more adamant view' — that sanctions should be enforced unconditionally until the government surrendered power. Only 26 per cent of blacks were totally opposed to sanctions, fearing that it would stunt economic growth. However, 60 per cent of respondents were not willing to support sanctions if this meant job losses for blacks. The number of hardliners who stood by the sanctions position, whatever the unemployment costs, declined to 14 per cent overall.

A director of CASE, Mark Orkin, interpreted this as illuminating the policy decisions on sanctions of the unions, the churches and political movements. 'They are calling for sanctions to be comprehensive rather than partial, and mandatory rather than voluntary, in the hope that this way sanctions will achieve the greatest possible political impact, while causing unavoidable economic hardship for the shortest possible time.'

What it does reveal is that a black coalminer might be willing to sacrifice his job if it meant a quick transition to the kind of government he supported. He would certainly not like to return home to his wife and children in some barren homeland to starve for a number of years while the economy slowly eroded under partial sanctions. In that case he would have to wait even longer for a job than for freedom — and he might have to wait a very long time for freedom.

Phillip van Niekerk

THE ALTERNATIVE TO TRADE WARS

A CONFERENCE FOR EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS

7TH & 8TH NOVEMBER 1987, POLYTECHNIC OF NORTH LONDON

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The greasy poll

DON'T BE fooled into thinking that the poll tax issue is cut and dried after the overwhelming vote for it at the Tory party conference. Tory backbenchers suspect that the Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley and his deputy Michael Howard are attempting to pull a confidence trick upon them — by pretending that the argument is all over. But the trick could easily backfire.

Many Tory MPs accept that there are times when governments, convinced they have right on their side, must put their heads down and drive on ruthlessly. But they don't think this should be one of them: the anxieties run too deep. Michael Howard is coming in for particular criticism for having accepted his brief, like the lawyer he is, and sticking to it too rigidly. No one is doubting his ability: some are questioning his judgment.

They are worried about the hardship which will be suffered by lower-income families, especially in London — even if they do have to pay only 20 per cent of the full poll tax or community charge.

The two ministers will be made forcefully aware of this as the Commons returns this week. The Tory backbench Environment Committee is already seeking another meeting with Mr Ridley, or Mr Howard, or both.

If Nicholas Ridley can convince Treasury and other key ministers to cut the transition period for the poll tax from four years to the one year he has always wanted that will, at least, do away with the nightmare of having rates and poll tax running together. It will also be one of the few recorded examples of a Tory minister listening to a Conservative conference. (One compromise would be to allow three or four years transition for London, where there is a particular problem, and a single year elsewhere.)

The Environment Secretary argues that since more than 70 per cent of the cost of local services is already met by tax-payers through grant, it is reasonable to collect the remaining 20 per cent or so from adults for the services they use. Tory critics say the principle of greater accountability is fine, but ignores the effect on millions of largely unsuspecting householders.

The highly respected Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy has produced figures which show that two million families in a bracket with the comparatively modest average rateable values of £138 will have to find appreciably more. If there are three at home, it will be an extra £7 a week. Even if they qualify for relief and benefits, experts say many poorer families will still have to find at least another £2 a week.

The effect in London is harshest. Nicholas Ridley claims that profligate Labour authorities will cut spending so that even the figures produced by his own department are hopelessly misleading. But are they? His figures give little difference between, say, Labour Lewisham and Tory Wandsworth. In Lewisham, a family of two with the average rateable value for the area of £233 will have to find another £16 a week, a staggering £30 if there are three. In Wandsworth the two-adult household will pay another £10 a week and those with three adults another £20 a week. No distinction is made between the family which includes three well-paid sons and another which is keeping grandma.

It is even argued that Mr Ridley is being charged with being politically inept. The Tories won votes in the general election, on sale of council houses. What are these new buyers going to make of a sudden rise in their housing outlay?

Ministers are also to be accused of playing Big Brother — or Big Sister. A new report of the Chartered Institute for the Scottish Office has pointed out it will be necessary to issue personal identification numbers to keep a check on the transients and to avoid confusion between people with similar names. Specially trained staff will have to pay regular visits: imagine what the Tories would have made of Labour proposals to do the same. Labour will want to make this a constitutional issue to be debated on the floor of the Commons.

Dr Jack Cunningham, the Shadow Environment secretary, has put the annual cost to local councils of extra staff and computers at 'at least £350m'. Collecting the new charge will be more difficult, too. Only 1 per cent of income is lost in collecting rates. Evasion of the new community charge could be 20 per cent, so that householders who do pay could have to find a fifth more.

A number of Tory MPs are offering a serious escape route. MPs like Tim Raison, Aylesbury, and Sir George Young, Ealing Acton and a former Environment Minister, argue that the charge could be made fairer by basing the new community charge on income bands.

Ministers say that introduction of even a limited form of local income tax would involve employers in a time-consuming operation of telling councils of their workers' earnings. Not so, say the experts. Employers would not be involved. The Inland Revenue would notify local councils of the net assessable income of households.

Other ministers suggest that local income bands would encourage profligate Labour authorities to spend more. Not so, say the advocates. The proportion to be met by each income band would be decided nationally. There would be no question of stinging a particular group.

Nicholas Ridley gives the impression that income tax bands would destroy the whole aim of the change — of getting adults to contribute directly to services and to make councils more accountable to electors.

In fact, the local income bands would still increase accountability. At present 15 million ratepayers make some contribution, 12 million pay the full whack. Local income bands would catch 25 million against 35 million caught by the community charge as it is proposed at the moment. The difference of 10 million is accounted for by the jobless and non-working wives, who might expect to escape anyway.

John Lewis

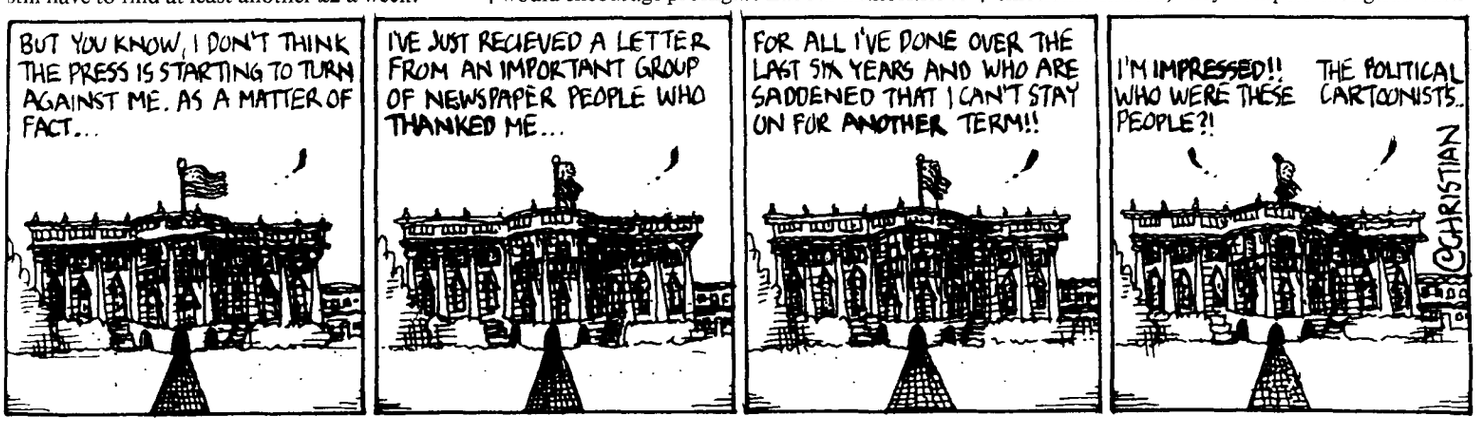
The author is the former political correspondent of the Sunday Telegraph *and the* London Daily News.

Cricketing for Peace

IF THE citizens of India and Pakistan — the two countries presently hosting the World Cup Cricket competition — have long been perplexed by the state of their relations, it is not surprising that foreigners are utterly confounded by them. British sports correspondents have made a valiant attempt to make sense of the Indo-Pak tussle, but have ended up merely describing their own bafflement.

Not surprising: for India and Pakistan are constantly and simultaneously pushed and pulled by polar-opposite emotions. When brothers turn enemies they are rarely sure of themselves. The resulting confusion is not a product of bad relations. It is the other way round. For instance, while the Indian and Pakistani cricket teams were competing in the World Cup down in the plains, their armies were shooting at each other up in the Himalayas. That is not just the irony of Indo-Pak relations but almost a symbol of the two countries' co-existence for four decades since independence.

Friendship and fighting are the two dominant strands of the complex, often confusing, bonds between them. The first is born of their shared history, culture, language, and kinship. The latter is the product of partition bitterness, when the departing Raj divided India and left behind the still suppurating sores of political rivalry and irridentism. Both governments have failed to resolve or mitigate these contradictory national emotions. Indeed, they compete alongside each


BUT YOU KNOW, I DON'T THINK THE PRESS IS STARTING TO TURN AGAINST ME. AS A MATTER OF FACT...
I'VE JUST RECIEVED A LETTER FROM AN IMPORTANT GROUP OF NEWSPAPER PEOPLE WHO THANKED ME...
FOR ALL I'VE DONE OVER THE LAST SIX YEARS AND WHO ARE SADDENED THAT I CAN'T STAY ON FOR ANOTHER TERM!!
I'M IMPRESSED!! WHO WERE THESE PEOPLE?!
THE POLITICAL CARTOONISTS..
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other. If at any time friendship is in the ascendant, deep-seated suspicions can arouse the fighting mood; if the countries are teetering on the brink of war, memories of past friendship can still restore common sense.

Yet India and Pakistan have fought *three* wars, and Kashmir, the principal focus of their fighting, has been a battlefield each time. This is why the shooting incidents in the Siachen glacier, despite its inhospitable 19,000-ft altitude and its ice-covered wastes, aroused anxiety. They could, for military or political reasons, snowball.

The shooting was not just a consequence of the strategic importance of the Siachen terrain. Although it controls the passes of the Karakoram range, and thus access from Pakistani-occupied Kashmir into China, *politics* probably provides the fuller explanation for the Pakistani battalion attack which displaced the cricket scores from the front pages. To understand this politics, it is essential to grasp what Kashmir means to India and Pakistan: and that goes back to the origins of the primordial emotions which govern their relations.

The discord over Kashmir stretches back to the very basis on which partition was carried out. As Kashmir has a Muslim majority, Pakistan laid claim to it. India needed Kashmir to prove its credentials as a secular democracy. For his part the Maharajah of Kashmir, a man with ambitions of his own, was eager for independent statehood, and sought to play off both parties.

In the event, an invasion by Pakistani forces brought about a hasty but legal accession to India. A ceasefire declared in 1949 partitioned Kashmir, creating a Pakistani enclave and giving two-thirds to India. On the basis of the accession India has always claimed sovereignty over the whole territory. Pakistan, meanwhile, has refused to part with its one-third, insisting that a plebiscite should determine the territory's final future. This India has refused to grant until all of Kashmir is under its control. Hence impasse, and the conversion of Kashmir into a political football. The Siachen glacier, situated in a poorly demarcated area of the ceasefire line, is simply the present playing field.

Military analysts will argue that last week's attacks were influenced by the time of year. As the autumn snows render the glacier inaccessible, fighting in October determines who will control the Siachen and its strategic passess until next year's spring thaw. But that is not the full truth.

India claims that the attack was the result of General Zia reacting to Miss Bhutto's taunts that his government had failed to defend Pakistani territory. A small, quick and easy victory in the snows of Siachen would have boosted the General's standing. But equally plausible is that a beleaguered Rajiv Gandhi, fighting party dissidence and press criticism, was searching for the same easy win to deflect his opponents and rally his supporters.

Whenever domestic politics appear to be overwhelming either government, the Kashmir issue is raked up. Its sparks rekindle the animosity between the two countries, which is what happened last week. Then, because the fighting was some of the worst in the last three years, it could have developed a ferocious momentum of its own. The impending cricket series down on the plains is at least one reason why it did not.

It is in this context that the cricketing contacts between the two countries gain their full significance. They provide a safety valve to release pressure and resume political negotiations. In February, following the January alert, General Zia used cricket as a mechanism for lowering the temperature. This month the World Cup will undoubtedly have the same effect. Aptly, its motto is 'Cricket for Peace'. In the subcontinent, that has a meaning that goes far beyond sport and snappy advertising.

Karan Thapar

The Hooray Henry Hurricane

'DON'T EXPECT any food parcels from up here,' I heard myself sneering uncharitably down the phone to a friend in South London who'd rung up to complain about the hurricane which devastated the South East last week. At first I felt ashamed of this reaction to a nursing sister who had struggled to work in the teeth of the winds.

But then I began to discover how many others from North of Milton Keynes saw this as a class-conscious hurricane, a politically OK meteorological phenomenon. 'But it hit Halifax,' I protested to one gloater. 'Casualties of war, some of the innocent always suffer,' I was reassured briskly.

Others confessed to looking through papers hoping to see pictures of expensive cars bisected by falling trees, and admitted to delightful visions of carparks full of overturned Porsches. 'It's all those fields of freezing Filofaxes I worry about, limp with exposure,' said a postman, who couldn't hide his joy at the City's Big Bang turning into a damp squib.

Mrs T. told the inhabitants of cities like Liverpool that they must live with the consequences of their voting. Inadvertently, she seems to have converted many an atheist and agnostic to belief in a deity — and an Old Testament one at that. 'It's divine retribution for them voting Tory,' declared an art gallery curator, 'but just you watch, they'll put up insurance premiums in Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow to pay for all those suburban dream homes ruined down there.'

Somehow the economic fortune of the South East has been converted into a belief that nothing can go wrong for it. The people I spoke to had a mental image which indicated that the affair was some sort of storm in a silver spoon, if not a teacup.

People around here are usually generous to a fault with charity collections — which is one reason why false collectors are a big local industry in many pubs. But a pub landlord assured me that a South Eastern disaster fund for the restitution of yuppy cell-phones would have all the fund-raising appeal of a testimonial dinner for Edwina Currie.

At first I laughed along. But the storm damage was, of course, real and there are still non-yuppies in the hurricane belt. But like a storm at sea, this one revealed the flaws in the construction of Thatcher's ship of state with a major crack in the social keel threatening somewhere around Milton Keynes.

Ian Williams

If the caption fits

No 40

This week a note of topicality has been injected into the cap contest. Ian McCaskill, clad in a two-piece and wondering, firstly who's trying to throttle him with his own tie, and secondly if he's going to need a mackintosh. Don't ask *us*, Ian! Ian McCaskill, for all you other-worldly creatures, is the weatherperson who actually *made it onto Selina Scott's fashion programme*. Ten-pound book token to the winner as usual. Entries to be in my Monday 2 November.

Winner: No 38

King Juan Carlos and Clint Eastwood (singing): 'La la la la la la la Bamba, Arriba, arriba . . .' (*L. Casement, London.*) Runner-up: Clint: 'He's asked for a double chocolate and pistachio with nuts.' (*G.S. Platt, Manchester.*)

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The jellyfish solution

WHEN MARTIN Luther King visited Britain in 1963 he held a meeting with various black members of the Labour Party: he urged them to become organised and to affiliate to their party as a group. It was a call repeated last week by a founder member of the Black Section movement as a compromise to a constitutional wrangle that has now entered its fourth year but still seems no nearer resolution.

In an apparent spirit of the 'new realism', Paul Sharma in last week's *Tribune* called upon the Black Section leadership to give up on their call for outright constitutional recognition and representation and instead seek to register as an affiliated group.

The precise mechanics by which this would be done have not yet been brought forward but it would probably entail something like this: if the plan were to receive the go-ahead, Black Sections would have the right, together with other socialist societies like the Fabians and the Jewish group Poale Zion, to vote for one representative on the party's National Executive Committee. In return for this moderation of national demands by the Black Sections, the party leadership would recognise as legitimate the right of local Black Sections to have delegates sit on General Management Committees and regional party committees.

But how likely is it that the plan will take off? Sharon Atkin, former chair of the national committee of Black Sections, is unconvinced: 'I met with Kinnock in 1985 and put the same idea to him but he would have no truck with it. He said that the people who put forward that idea were "spineless jellyfish".' Atkin also believes that when the idea of re-opening the party register was first mooted three years ago it was specifically intended to keep groups *out*, rather than allow new ones *in*. Indeed, a very similar proposal to Sharma's was put to the NEC in June 1985 by Eric Heffer but was heavily rejected, suggesting that the NEC's opposition to Black Sections was non-negotiable. As Marc Wadsworth, current chair of Black Sections, says: 'We are open to negotiations, but there are no negotiations to be had.'

But Sharma's initiative *has* received a warm response in the black press. It is expressed in the editorial comment in last week's issue of the *Asian Times*, for example 'If this proposal can build on the gains already achieved then it should be welcomed. Moreover it should be noted that this compromise is potentially acceptable to both sides whereas the tactics pursued to date regarding recognition of Black Sections, irrespective of their other achievements, show less and less sign of achieving victory at party conference.'

The bottom line of the debate is the cause of black representation and how best to pursue it. One seasoned black campaigner observed that the Black Section movement is no more than a new force in a much older struggle, and in recognising this it should become less ambitous in its first intentions. 'After all,' he says, 'you can't sprint a marathon.'

Iqbal Wahhab

POLITICAL SKETCH

Their right royal deserts

Edward Pearce

ONE OF THE many pleasures of being asked to fill this slot from a political standpoint identical to that of the Marquis of Halifax — 'If the boat tips too far one way, lean against it' — has been the chance of a spot of constitutional-mongering. 'Pearce reforms the Lords' was a headline that gave me a lot of pleasure.

So it might be useful before parliament gets into its stride and we become committed to faithful coverage of debates on the pilchard equalisation fund or the redistributive measures of the Hon. Nicholas Ridley, to have a mild go at royalty — 'Pearce fixes the Monarchy' if you like.

I don't think I am quite alone in thinking that any graph of the monarchy's standing would show a small but distinct dip in the last few years. Monarchy, more than most institutions, depends upon mystique. Like the judges guided by Lord Kilmuir, it was long the custom of royalty to say nothing at all. Give or take that cold gravy session at 3 pm on Christmas day for which some people would stand to attention, they kept quiet and derived great credit for silent wisdom.

Heaven forbid that they should revert entirely to such a sclerotic norm. 'A king,' says John Selden, 'is a thing men make for their own sakes for quietness sake. Just as in a family one man is appointed to buy the meat.' Unfortunately we haven't had too much quietness lately. The antics of what are called 'the young royals' are always with us. It is a matter of note to *Sun* and *Mail* readers to hear about the Princess of Wales and a friend dressing as policemen at some wretched night club. As for rivalry between that Princess and the Duchess at the natural level of those whose teens are prolonged into their mid-twenties, the cup of the witless royal reporter runneth over.

All dignity ultimately rests upon some measure of deserving. An institution can take so much foolish coverage of the foolishness it spins for itself before suffering the first of a series of devaluations. The monarchy which the present Queen has enjoyed is itself the creation of her father, that endearing, not especially gifted but genuinely devoted and quietly patriotic man who was observed by the citizens to have stayed in London during the entire war.

If a king is to function as a constitutional device, a hereditary president held in non-political esteem, he can get by on dogged duty-doing, but he will be marked up, like George VI for unusual devotion. However, that esteem is like a deposited sum of money. It can be burned up or, as now, frittered away in small sums. There is no crisis of monarchy, merely a quiet voice saying that too much of Prince Edward making a fool of himself and the sisters-in-law rolling copy for the *Sun* do not constitute good news.

There has been no intelligent republicanism in this country for some time. Willie Hamilton in his cackling, sour, fishwife style was a royal plus. But nothing is fixed. In particular as devolution starts up again, I would expect particularist feeling in Scotland to have a strong republican tinge to it.

And monarchy *is* vulnerable. Its astonishing wealth, untaxed for 200 years, is anachronistic since it is linked to no productive or wealth-creating process and gives to royalty openly what every resident of Jersey and the Caymans seeks to obtain by guile. Tax exemption may be nice but it has no dignity, asserts no kingship, merely fulfilling the daydream of a hypothesising accountant.

THE DAYS are slipping away when royalty would be instantly and unintelligently adored just for being royalty. All idol worship is pretty puerile, but the youth of the pop generation tend to roll their own. Michael Jackson and Madonna probably count for more with the under 25s than the witless, tiara-ed Henriettas who fill the swoon pages. There is something slightly passé and elderly about even the youngest royals.

To all such criticism one would like to make a personal exception of the Prince of Wales. Anyone who likes music and Italy and winces at Mrs Thatcher is fine by me. But the Prince lives in an age of thick-headed news editors and subs, for whom his mildly upmarket tastes and inclination now and then to read a book are walking death. He is guaranteed a bad and giggling press. For it is the misfortune of monarchy that it depends more upon the media than can ever be good for anything.

For years those media were sycophantic and abject to a degree. Since Rupert Murdoch, but not narrowly because of him, they have become sated, anxious for spice and pizazz. The genuflecting had to stop, but it did so in the least healthy way. Instead of the press picking up sensible, Scandinavian (or indeed Spanish) attitudes to royalty which means saying 'We want you and respect you, but on citizen terms not as a bubble of court froth', they have mined royalty for silliness to the margins of viability.

The sweetness on the tongue has grown sickly and much fawning has turned at last to derision. The British go on complacently about the supremacy of their monarchy. In fact we have everything to learn from Spain. The King of Spain seems to understand both this age and the form of kingship. Modesty, relative frugality, political sophistication and a way of being humorously grown-up have deserved the respect they have won. Ask Santiago Carillo of the Spanish Communist Party.

But contrast, even the best members of our royal family seem to have been strap-hanging in the usual unthreatened, unburned, complacent British way. This British institution will actually have to start learning and adapting. It could make a start by growing smaller and less expensive. Nobody loves hangers on.

It could also contemplate a period of silence. For what we could do with, most of all, is a monarchy which has thought *about* itself and tried to join the adult world. □

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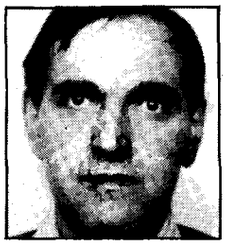

BEN PIMLOTT

Making defence policy coherent or . . . feeding bits to the bear

BACK TO SCHOOL, and back to Labour's biggest headache. Defence comes up this week with the Arms Control (Diplomatic Immunities) Bill and next week with the Estimates. Will a new, more united Labour position on defence begin to emerge? Not quite yet. For the moment, the subject on the left that fires the greatest passion, inspires the most idealism, and pulls the biggest crowds, remains also the one that causes the worst embarrassment. Yet, as East-West bilateral talks continue to make startling progress, Labour's opportunity to turn the tables on Mrs Thatcher — bizarrely obsessed with the fantasy of a British *force de frappe* — has arguably never been greater.

Defence is due to be tossed into the NEC's heralded 'review', along with all the other hot potatoes. If the outcome is to be more than ingenious new patterns of words that could be given any interpretation you wish — an art form at which Labour Party committees are peculiarly adept — the NEC working party will have to engage, not merely in heresy, but in heinous blasphemy. At the same time, it will not get far without recognising the special intensity of feeling that defence issues arouse.

The members will have to consider three linked questions. First, though seldom given the priority it deserves: what policy would do most to reduce the risk of war, especially nuclear war? Second, what policy can voters be persuaded to support? (And, conversely, what will they definitely reject?) Third, what kind of policy will not merely avoid another explosion in the Labour Party, but will actually be embraced by intelligent socialists with enthusiasm? When these questions have been asked before, the answers have not been identical. Perhaps it is fanciful to imagine that they ever could be. The chances of bringing them together, however, may recently have increased.

Nevertheless there are difficulties, and the biggest is an extremely widespread belief that, in policy discussions, change is a synonym for sell-out. This point is allied to another. If a virtue of the British left is its loyalty to fundamental beliefs, a vice is a tendency to sanctify — mummify might be a better term — whatever its enemies oppose. Clause Four, originally a vague piece of Fabianism drafted by the gradualist Sidney Webb in 1918, is one example. Unilateralism is another.

Unlike pacifism, unilateralism is not a principle, but a method that can be made to work in a number of ways. It was the ferocious opposition of the Gaitskellites during CND's first phase that gave it a mystical quality. After CND's initial defeat, it almost disappeared from the political lexicon, and was not discussed at five successive general elections. When it re-emerged, with the revival of the peace movement, it had been transformed into a holy word, part of the catechism of every socialist novice.

NOWADAYS, not everybody uses it. 'Non-nuclear' is considered more polite. Yet as this year's Brighton Conference showed by an overwhelming vote, 'unilateralism' retains a central place in the theology. If few shadow ministers are happy to present themselves as unilateralists, even fewer brazenly declare that they are not. This is because unilateralism — strange, latinate, technical mouthful — has become in a labour movement of uneasily shifting opinions the one true and simple test of faith.

Should the Party Leader now declare his intention to fight, fight and fight again to remove from Labour's programme a word with which, as a matter of fact, his own name has been particularly associated? Obviously such a thing is impossible, even if it should be desired. Not only, as Ken Livingstone has warned, would there be civil war. To drop a symbol over which so much blood has been shed (and so many elections lost) would look like cowardice, and anyway it would not carry conviction. Opponents would rightly detect unilateralist emotions beneath the surface of whatever bland alternative was put forward, and the leadership would be even more defensive on defence at the next election than at the last. But the biggest reason is a genuine concern about the threat of nuclear war felt by constituency and union activists, for whom the unilateralist banner remains sacred.

> ***'. . . unilateralism — strange, latinate mouthful — has become in a movement of uneasily shifting opinions the one true test of faith'***

In short, unilateralism cannot be jettisoned. The word and the imperative behind it are here to stay. How it may be understood, on the other hand, is another matter: the alternatives need not be an unreformed fundamentalism or a new, suspicious-looking brand of fudge. Once it is accepted that unilateralism has acquired a place in Labour's pantheon second only to socialism itself, the problem becomes not how to get rid of it or marginalise it but how to press it into service.

Fortunately, some of CND's best-regarded leaders, encouraged by international events, have been coming to a similar conclusion. 'A negotiated disarmament process is under way,' Joan Ruddock wrote in the *Guardian* last week, 'and we unilateralists have to inquire into the advantages and disadvantages of seeking to engage with it . . . I hope that this will be the approach taken by the Labour Party in the defence policy review.' This is a major step from the lonely act of renunciation, to be carried out separate from, and even in spite of, the superpowers, that characterised the orthodoxy of the early '80s, as of the '50s and '60s.

Beyond this, however, Mrs Ruddock is not prepared to go: she is not yet ready to take her case to its logical conclusion. Having argued that 'we could use Trident politically, by *demanding* (my italics) that the Soviets match our unilateral action,' she says that a Labour government would have to proceed to a complete nuclear divestment anyway. Here's the rub. For how can you 'demand' something and hope for your 'demand' to be met, if you pay out in advance, and promise to go on paying out, before the price has even been discussed? The failure to provide an answer that will satisfy non-experts is what makes classical unilateralism unelectable.

If unilateral means total and immediate as well as unconditional, then at this point the argument gets stuck. Yet it does not necessarily mean these things. There is no need for unilateral action to be open-ended in order to maintain the essence of the technique. If (as Mrs Ruddock argues) unilateralism is to be an adaptable stratagem to be used in conjunction with other stratagems in the quest for peace, then the all-or-nothing stance becomes out-moded. The promise of unilateralism, properly so called, lies in the refreshing notion that one side should take an initiative without waiting for it to be matched. In just such a way have both the Americans and the Russians, at different times, acted unilaterally over the suspension of tests, in order to show the seriousness of their intent.

UNILATERALISM as a diplomatic approach, rather than as a single once-and-for-always act, might start with nuclear weapons, but need make no ultimate distinction between nuclear and conventional. It would not have to seek (as Labour's pre-election policy appeared fatuously to do) to replace nuclear weapons with conventional ones of equivalent defensive power. Its aim would be to cut all arsenals, nuclear and conventional, in stages.

The new unilateralism would not be a 'spur' (Joan Ruddock's word) to other negotiations, but an enticement. Its success would depend on restraint. If you toss the bear the whole carcass in one go, it has no incentive to perform. Instead you have to feed it bits. Thus, we destroy a few missiles and wait. If the Russians respond, we move again, and so on. There should be no reason why the Americans, whose acceptance of any disarmament plan is a critical element, should not co-operate.

Not only could unilateralism of this kind begin to reconcile all but the most hawkish and dovish in the labour movement without being, or seeming to be, a compromise. It could also have an impact when it matters most, which is now. The scandal of Mrs Thatcher's attempt to limit the scope of bilateral talks instead of seeking to extend them to include (for example) battlefield nuclear weapons in Germany, urgently needs a proper airing — something that cannot happen until Labour's own confusions have been cleared. Giving unilateralism coherence, and learning not to be ashamed of it, could be a step towards the isolation of the government's dangerous, costly and vainglorious militarism. □

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A politics for survival to the year 2030

In less than 50 years' time, London could be under melted ice-cap water and Washington could be arid: **JANE DIBBLIN** ***reports on the effects on the old politics of the fear of ecological disaster. Factboxes by*** **PETER CAPELLA**

JIM SLATER is a tough working-class Geordie and the president of the National Union of Seamen. He doesn't fit the common image of an ecologist — he doesn't appear at conferences in designer sweaters and sandals — but he's a dedicated member of Greenpeace.

In 1983 the NUS banned dumping nuclear waste at sea, which was taken up by transport unions first in Britain and then around the world. This put pressure on nuclear stations to halt dumping which they have now agreed to do, until they can prove it safe.

The NUS has since turned its attention to the British government's importation of 400,000 tons of toxic waste a year, dumped from ships into 'spoil' grounds in the North Sea; by 1989 the UK will be the only country still using the North Sea as a dumping ground. This year's Trade Union Congress carried a motion proposed by the NUS calling on the government to stop it.

In an economic climate where many unions are finding it difficult to rally their members even to protect their own jobs, it is particularly daring of the NUS to broaden its area of concern. Slater says there is widespread enthusiasm for the issues in the union; there has to be, if his members are going to put their jobs on the line.

Growing awareness and concern about the environment stung all parties into 'greening' their manifestos in this year's election campaign. The Labour Party's Charter for the Environment was a remarkably radical document. Yet large sections of the left remain indifferent or actively hostile to the politics of ecology.

If that hostility is verbalised at all it most often takes the form of the charge that ecology is a middle-class concern; that worrying about the environment is a 'luxury' which most working-class people can't afford or aren't interested in. To what extent does that charge hold true?

First, although a quarter of the membership of Greenpeace, for example, is unemployed, the vast majority of its members have had the benefit of higher education. Both Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth admit that, yes, their membership is middle class, and most particularly grouped in the lower-earning caring professions. That isn't in and of itself conclusive; to assume that people only identify with issues which defend their own class interests is to ignore the voting patterns of the last decade. More importantly, what is their political project?

People who are concerned about the environment are found across a wide political spectrum. Ecology can wander into the eco-feudalism advocated by Teddy Goldsmith, editor of the *Ecologist*. It can even be appropriated by the likes of the National Front whose espousal of a handful of environmental issues is not only a pragmatic bait to today's ecologically aware youth but is located in a tradition of the far right's love affair with 'blood and soil'.

> ***'Conservationists are largely concerned with preserving the status quo in society and politics; but most ecologists identify themselves as progressive'***

Back to a golden age

'Conservationists' are, as their name suggests, largely concerned with preserving the status quo, and not just in the natural world, but often in society and politics too. They might join groups such as the National Trust or the World Wildlife Fund.

The majority of ecologists, however, would identify themselves as progressive. Contrary to caricature, few hark back to a golden age of pre-industrialisation, but many question the possibility — or even desirability — of continued economic growth, on the basis that the world's non-renewable resources are fast being used up. Says Jonathon Porritt of Friends of the Earth: 'The pursuit of industrial expansion and economic growth simply cannot produce the kind of sustainable, just and self-reliant way of life that we should now be seeking.'

Such ecologists are at loggerheads with one of the basic tenets of the Marxist vision: that is, if only nature can be harnessed by technology, plenty can be produced for all. Although the present-day Labour Party is by no means Marxist, the ecologists' challenge to the traditional socialists' mainstay of economic growth (as espoused by Anthony Crosland and others since) makes the possibility of extensive dialogue difficult; it is particularly at odds with Labour's election promises of everything for everyone. Mrs Thatcher has made a virtue out of warning of a difficult path ahead; Labour doesn't want to lose the votes of the haves, so it has to promise more so that the have-nots can also have something.

This kind of ecologist is therefore suspicious of socialism's symbiotic relationship with capitalism, based as they both are on

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industrialism: ecological disaster is no stranger to the socialism of the Eastern bloc, they point out, and the response to Chernobyl has stimulated the most active opposition movement in Hungary since 1956. Their criticism of the alienating nature of industrial work and anti-materialist philosophy, however, has roots in certain socialist traditions: in the work of William Morris and Robert Owen.

Because the ecological project cannot alleviate poverty (Porritt's definition also includes a 'just and self-reliant' society) simply by producing more, it demands a radical redistribution of wealth. That is the logical conclusion of its belief, but it is one which most 'single issue' ecological campaigns stop far short of, often for fear of alienating the middle-ground people — the 'conservationists' who support them and with whom they need to form alliances. For those who stop short of that conclusion, the charge that they are not concerned with the lives of ordinary working people does stick.

The West German Greens have followed through this logic, and have evolved the social policies which it requires — with notable success in terms of gingering the whole of German politics, and, with less success, in terms of acquiring electoral power to carry through their policies. The British Green Party is a pale comparison. It is trapped by the British electoral system: without proportional representation it has virtually no hope of winning seats in parliament — and it has only three local councillors. It is thus stuck in limbo, in reality a pressure group yet calling itself a party and spending disproportionate money and energy on fighting no-hope elections.

OF COURSE, this analysis simplifies the tension between reds and greens; in the more complex picture there is a growing number of people looking from different directions for some synthesis between socialism and ecology. There are people in the Green Party who are struggling to develop social policies such as the promising Basic Income Scheme. Some ecologists, who call themselves 'realistic greens', talk, as does Nick Gallie of Greenpeace, in terms of 'qualitative rather than quantitative growth' — an expansion of economic activity in the caring professions, in 'clean' industry and in recycling, waste processing, research and development of renewable energy.

Both West German and US investigations into the impact of environmental protection measures on their economies showed that more jobs were created from the pollution control industry than were lost from companies closing down or moving abroad (in West Germany, one employers' federation disputed the government study and conducted its own: but this supported the original findings).

That agenda is very closely echoed in Labour's *Charter for the Environment* and in its election literature: environmentally safe industrial growth, closely monitored by a US-style Environmental Protection Service. Allan Roberts, shadow environment minister, is adamant: 'The jobs versus the environment debate is a false one, a dead end. It's only a problem if you throw the free market into the equation.' (The effect is spoiled by the fact that Roberts, like his boss John Cunningham, are pro-nuclear power.)

Parts of the traditional labour movement are also developing a 'green awareness'. At this month's Labour Party conference a motion on the economy put by the GMB general union (to which the majority of workers at the Sellafield nuclear processing plant belong) included a clause calling for 'environmentally sensitive economic growth'.

In a sense, there is nothing new or surprising about this, once the environment is seen as the urban landscape, not just the rural one: unions have long fought for a safe working environment. Clean air, clean drinking water, refuse collection, reducing in lead in petrol and, perhaps above all, decent housing are all environmental issues which intimately effect the lives of the majority of people. Last year the chair of Friends of the Earth's strategy committee, Joe Weston, accused parts of the green movement of being trapped in a one-dimensional definition of the environment and incapable of building a mass movement *(Red and Green,* Pluto £4.95).

'Ecology is about profits and poverty, about the quality of society as well as basic survival. Yet in opposition it is often confined to consumer choice'

'The sky is falling'

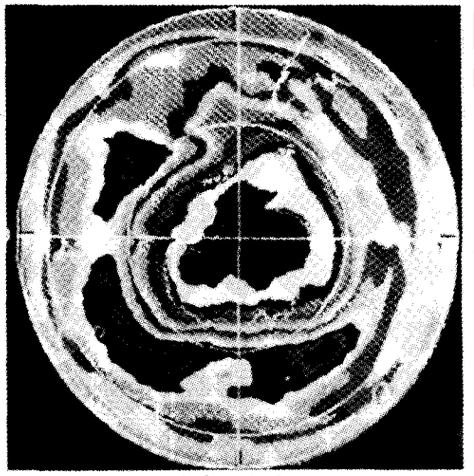
THE destruction of the ozone layer is the new brand leader of environmental concern, a problem with global consequences so vast that it prompted the world elite of decision-makers and scientists to produce a treaty that ignores political and cultural barriers. To many of the general public it means little; the scientists have spotted a receding hairline in the distant Antarctic, but it appears no more malignant than a premature case of baldness on someone else's head.

Despite the sudden fuss caused by the British Antarctic Survey's discovery of the 'hole' in the ozone layer in 1985, confirmed unambiguously as being caused by artificial chloro-fluorocarbons (CFCs) last month, human-produced gases were already implicated in the gradual heating up of the Earth's climate.

By 2030, the 'greenhouse effect' could turn Washington into an arid area (with an average of 12 days a year where the temperature exceeds 38°C/100°F) and raise the level of the North Sea by 1.5 metres, flooding parts of London, unless something is done about it, according to the United Nations Environment Programme.

The importance of the ozone layer as a natural protective cocoon filtering the ultra-violet radiation produced by the sun has never been in doubt. Without it, vegetable and human life would shrivel. Even with the normal levels of radiation allowed through the ozone layer, many holidaymakers on the Costa Brava are in need of copious doses of sun tan oil to shield their skin from ultra-violet radiation. The Costa Brava effect will increase as the ozone layer gets thinner, prematurely ageing skin, and causing eye damage and skin cancer. The link between Californian sun and the skin cancer on President Reagan's nose is real. According to the US Academy of Sciences a 1 per cent drop in ozone levels causes a 2 per cent rise in skin cancer.

The discovery of the noxious effects of aerosols, hamburger packaging and fire extinguishers reads like a cheap sci-fi thriller. When solitary Antarctic scientist Joe Farman first explained to the world in 1985 that there was a hole in the atmosphere above his head, he told NASA something its Nimbus satellite had been programmed to disbelieve.



October 1985, the hole gets deeper

However, the organised consistency of the reaction thereafter is a model that could be applied with great effect to other ecological issues. Once the dissident readings were rehabilitated, NASA discovered that Farman's observations were correct, and sent teams of scientists to the South Pole to collect data on each possible natural and artifical agent acting on the ozone layer. Within two years by a logical process of elimination the teams had narrowed the problems down to CFCs. This was accompanied by unusually swift action by 24 governments signing an agreement to limit the production of CFCs in Montreal on 16 September, before the scientists had even completed their mission in the South Pole. Unfortunately, Montreal also shows the flaws of compromise. Talk of a tough stand on an 85 per cent reduction from the US government, home of most CFC producers, never translated into action. Delegates left Montreal having agreed to a 50 per cent cut in CFC production by 1998, which will only slow the depletion of the ozone layer. Because of the durable effect of chlorine in the atmosphere, the 50 per cent cut will not necessarily halve the rate of depletion before the end of the century.

To help world leaders and industry in their efforts, in the absence of official information, ordinary British consumers can obtain lists of aerosols with CFC from Friends of the Earth (01-490 1555) if they wish to avoid using them. ●

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Marxist root or branch?

The relationship between red and green is still a messy affair, with each struggling for ascendancy. Should ecology be grafted onto socialism or vice versa? Or, as Robin Jenkins asked in the sadly short-lived journal *Emergency,** which is the root and which is the branch? He argues that ecology must be the root and the trunk precisely because Marxism is predicated on the need not only to control but to rise above the laws of nature, sometimes by simply denying their existence. (Hence there is no contradiction for Mitterrand and Gorbachev in their countries continuing to produce nuclear waste with no means of disposing safely of it.) As such it cannot admit a mutually interdependent relationship with the Earth and its resources. Ecology needs Marxism, he says, to provide a framework for human relations.

This is heresy to much of the left, which argues that socialism must come first: without its understanding of the centres of power and how to use them to bring about transformation, many socialists say, ecology is a vision without a vehicle. Capitalism and the free market, not industrialism itself, is the problem. And only a socialist economy which reins in the excesses of profit-driven industry, they maintain, can take care of the environment.

Certainly, potential socialist concerns go hand in hand with the increased awareness of green issues over the past decade. This awareness is partly a reaction to the present government's anti-environmental stand, despite the charming and seemingly well-intentioned William Waldegrave in the Environment Ministry last term. Giving rein to the free market has allowed pollution as well as abuse of health and safety standards; lack of investment in public transport and in publicly-owned housing stock; plans to privatise water; refusal to sign international pollution control agreements. All these touch on the fundamental issues of ecology: ecology is about profits and poverty, about the quality of the society we choose to create, as well as our basic survival.

Yet ecology in opposition is often confined to an expression of consumer choice: whether to buy biodegradable washing powder or food without additives. Consumer power is not inconsequential: Barclays has pulled out of South Africa and the fur trade has suffered considerably from the shift in public opinion. McDonalds has hastily offered to change its packaging to avoid producing fluorocarbons since publicity over the ozone layer mounted. Ten to 15 per cent of the US stock market is now 'socially-screened' investment, claims a report by the Ethical Investment Fund, and the British market is moving that way: nuclear power figures consistently among the top three criteria. At a local level, fish and chip shops in the Windscale/Sellafield area now carry signs reassuring customers that the fish is not caught locally.

But the combined number of 'have nots' — who can't afford to choose — and the 'want now — don't cares' far outweighs those who can and will shop around and pay more. Yet the response — and successes — of local communities threatened with a nuclear dump site (the Not In My Backyard syndrome analysed by Rob Edwards in the *NS*) and of the transport unions' refusals to dump nuclear waste at sea, is some measure of the potential available for a genuinely mass movement.

Time is not on our side. Nick Gallie of Greenpeace sums it up thus: unless the parliamentary left takes office with a genuine commitment to green policies 'it will pass into a historical irrelevancy'. □

Emergency will be publishing one more issue, available from 83 Shaftsbury Road, London N19.

Stinging in the rain

ACID RAIN is the invisible modern equivalent of what Victorians once used to curse as trains spewing huge plumes of black smoke were let loose across the countryside, and the industrial revolution pumped a smelly sulphurous soot onto the rooftops of northern villages: smoke pollution.

Sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide produced by burning petrol, oil or coal react with other chemicals in the atmosphere to produce sulphuric acid and nitric acid. The two acids can be carried long distances before being deposited by rain. The gradual destruction of plant and animal life is now well documented, and much of the effect — particularly with sulphur dioxide — is cumulative, as the chemicals build up in the soil and in lakes. An estimate produced by the West German government puts the annual cost of forest death — *Waldsterben* — at £500 million with a further £100 million for monuments and buildings damaged by acid rain.

All the impetus for legislation and action on acid rain in Britain has so far come from abroad. Our most successful export is pollution; we send 80 per cent of our sulphur emissions abroad, mainly to contribute to the acidification of Scandinavian lakes. European Community legislation — largely drawn up the insistence of the Germans — will force us to comply with limits on car exhaust emissions by 1992, and the Central Electricity Generating Board is installing desulphurisation equipment at two power stations as part of a £600 million programme to become operational in 1993.

But acid rain is still an unknown quantity in Britain, partly because an effective monitoring network for acidity, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions was only set up last year. Before then, experts could only rely on sparse official data produced by 16 sites in some parts of Britan, or on figures taken by 10,000 school children wielding lemonade bottles to collect rainwater, as part of a scheme set up by he educational arm of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (Watch).

The complexity of the issue has fostered confusion rather than an understanding of the causes and the effects of acid rain. Doubts among scientists about the exact way the acid affects trees — whether it is through the leaves or by being absorbed through the soil — or the inability to pin down the cause of *Waldsterben* to one of the pollutants has diverted from the majority of the evidence. The British government's refusal to join the '30 per cent club' of 21 nations committed to reduce sulphur emissions by one-third by 1993 was explained not in economic terms, but by a lack of scientific evidence. The reaction to acid rain here has been slow and guarded, leading to an exasperated outburst from one young scientist: 'When we say we don't know, we mean that you should reduce the whole lot at the same time, not just one.' ●

North-South divide

BY THE END of the century, one-fifth of the world's rainforests will disappear; the Ivory Coast will be a bleak landscape broken only by the occasional scraggy survivor from the forest that used to provide the country's third largest export. Not that the land can easily be used for other crops; deforestation allows soil to be eroded far more quickly by the elements. In turn, increased soil erosion deprives the soil of nutrients and reduces the depth available for roots to take hold — in India, one-third of cultivated land is affected in this way.

The disappearance of our forests contributes to desertification. Deserts are expanding at the rate of 21 million hectares — or one Great Britain — a year, a trend accelerated by drought. The people fleeing from these areas end up in ever-expanding cities with even more environmental problems.

Pressure on the World Bank to ensure the environmental viability of its development projects has only started to tell this year, after a scandal over funds used for a massive deforestation project in the province of Rondonia, in North Western Brazil. But the problem is of such a great scale that it requires concerted action, which may be forthcoming in the United Nations next month. The 'Brundtland Report', *Our Common Future*, was published by the World Commission on Environment and Development, amid much pomp and circumstance in April — but forgotten since, despite the energy of Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway, who chairs the Commission. It is to be presented to the UN general assembly in New York, with a very pessimistic overview of the link between environment and economic growth both in the Third World and in the industrialised nations.

Unfortunately, one vital section on finance may be dismissed as a piece of 'world-government' fiction by the major powers: a tax on common goods, levied on activities such as ocean fishing, air and sea transport, sea bed mining, and 'parking charges' for communications satellites. Another suggestion involves a tax on luxury goods. Revenue would go towards environmental projects.

Nevertheless, there is a glimmer of hope on the British side. At the start of the election campaign, film of the Prime Minister at home in Dulwich revealed that the only reading matter on the coffee table in the Thatcher household was *Our Common Future*; maybe she is the new champion of radicalism, after all. ●

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PERMANENT GOVERNMENT

Labour and Whitehall: bridging the ignorance gap

Peter Hennessy

IN ONE ASPECT of their multi-coloured picture of the years 1964-70, the diaries penned by veterans of the first Wilson governments are all of a piece: the Civil Service is portrayed as both a determined barrier to reform and a wily group of men and women waiting for the slightest slackening of political will to capture over-stretched Labour ministers for traditional departmental policies. Dick Crossman engaged in titanic struggles at Housing and Government with the mighty Dame Evelyn Sharp. Barbara Castle at Transport spent hours with Harold Wilson trying to get her permanent secretary, Sir Thomas Padmore, moved (she failed). And in the latest diaristic despatch from the trenches of the mid-'60s, we find Tony Benn engaged in protracted tussles first with Sir Ronald German, Director-General of the Post Office, and Sir Otto Clarke at Mintech[1].

> ***Any sensible opposition party would train its shadow ministerial team in the intricacies of Whitehall life***

It all made a sharp contrast with the Attlee governments. We learn from Hugh Dalton's diaries[2] that George VI told Nye Bevan in 1945 when Attlee was putting together his Cabinet, 'Well, the Prime Minister has had a very difficult time, I'm sure. What I say is "Thank God for the Civil Service!"' Yet even Dalton, who liked to bang on about officials being 'congenital snaghunters', purred with pleasure on his return to the Cabinet in 1948, from temporary exile after his Budget leak the year before, that 'I am impressed once more with the freshness following a break, with the efficiency of the Higher Civil Service, making crisp sense of ministerial wavering diffuseness, and preparing admirable papers making it as easy as possible for ministers to choose between clear alternatives'. As for Attlee, with Labour out of office in the early '50s, he would lecture international socialist conferences about the virtues of impartial career civil servants in Whitehall who were busily undoing for the Conservatives the same pieces of legislation that they had so recently drafted for Labour.

For the ministers in Attlee's Cabinet, when their post-office thoughts returned to the Civil Service, it was to praise and not to blame. The contrast with 1964-70 is all the more marked when you measure the achievements of the Attlee years against those of the Wilson years which were a tale of rich promise squandered. I had a chance to talk to Tony Benn about this during a recent open discussion of his diaries. He made two observations: that Attlee and his ministers came to power in 1945 with five years' experience of office in the wartime coalition; and they inherited a Whitehall machine accustomed to intervention. Both factors were missing in 1964 when the Civil Service had become attuned to 13 years of Conservative policies. Mr Benn said the position would be similar when Labour next took office.

I'm not sure Tony Benn is right in his own version of Churchill's remark in 1951 that the members of the Private Office he inherited from Attlee were 'drenched with socialism'. Most of the senior officials in 1964, far from being drenched with Toryism, recalled the Labour years of 1945-51 with affection. Top Treasury men like William Armstrong and Douglas Allen swore by Stafford Cripps. The Foreign Office had not stopped pining for Ernie Bevin. Barbara Castle's permanent secretary at Overseas Development, Sir Andrew Cohen, had, with total dedication, started the decolonisation ball moving when Creech Jones was Colonial Secretary in the late '40s. And the same Otto Clarke whom Tony Benn encountered at Technology had been the most inventive man in the Treasury during the Attlee years.

Mr Benn is undoubtedly right about the bulk of Wilson's first team arriving in their ministerial suites in a state of ignorance about the Civil Service. Only three of them — Wilson himself, Jim Griffiths and Patrick Gordon-Walker — had sat in Attlee's Cabinet. Neither Dick Crossman, supposedly an expert on government, nor Tommy Balogh, who had drafted Wilson's Whitehall reform plan in 1963, had any idea, for example, that official committees made up of civil servants shadowed Cabinet committees staffed by ministers, as Crossman admitted in his diary.

The ignorance problem, unlike many other new ministers inevitably face, is remediable. Any sensible opposition party would train its shadow ministerial team in the intricacies of Whitehall life. Any sensible government would ease the rules which prevent civil servants meeting opposition spokespeople, snatched conversations at academic seminars and trade dinners apart. As for those diaries from the '60s which display in technicolour the penalties of mutual unfamiliarity between permanent Civil Service and new ministerial team, they should be part of the training manual for aspirant minister and rising civil servant alike. ☐

1. Tony Benn, *Out of the Wilderness: Diaries 1963-67*, Hutchinson, £14.95.
2. Ben Pimlott (ed.). *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton: 1918-40, 1945-60*, Cape, £40.

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A counsel of prevention

France has developed a social approach to crime which has survived a change of government and is an example for the British left. **MICHAEL KING** *reports*

RECENT BRITISH law and order policies — of increasing police powers and imposing tougher punishments — owe much to the Tory philosophy of individual responsibility and accepting the consequences of one's actions. The roots of the French crime prevention programme draw nourishment from the values of François Mitterrand's 1981 socialist government. These embraced the ideals of 'the community' and social solidarity — an end to the divisive nature of French society which peoples of all classes and races working together for the common good. However utopian these ideals may have been as principles for general government policy, in the area of crime prevention their translation into social action has been remarkably successful — so much so, that the conservative/Gaullist alliance under Jacques Chirac, returned to power in 1985, has continued to provide both financial and political support to the main institution of crime prevention: the *Conseils Communals de Prévention de la Délinquance*. Chirac himself presides over the National Crime Prevention Council.

The contrast with the law and order policies of the Tory party in Britain is striking. No right-wing French politician would dream of denying any causal connection between youth unemployment and crime. Most of them, including the mayors of many large cities, subscribe to a policy which explicitly recognises that social deprivation, family instability, school failure, lack of job prospects and a negative self-image all contribute to a drift by young people towards anti-social and self-destructive behaviour.

Purely in statistical terms, the French policy appears to be working. Over the past two years France has experienced a substantial fall of over 10 per cent in reported crimes generally associated with young people, such as criminal damage, theft and minor assaults. In Lille, one of the large cities to embrace wholeheartedly the socialist crime prevention programme, the fall in reported crime between 1985 and 1986 was in the order of 12 per cent — a much sharper decline than that experienced in neighbouring areas *not* covered by the city's crime prevention programme.

Further, since 1981, there have been no serious street disturbances of a racial or anti-police nature in France's cities, despite an immigrant population comparable in numbers to that existing in many of Britain's cities. Quite apart from these indications that the crime prevention programme may well be fulfilling many of its aims, there can be no doubt that uniting all the mainstream political parties behind a progressive, far-sighted youth policy and providing resources to put this policy into effect has been no mean achievement. How has it come about?

Educating the politicians

In the first place, the socialist government was able, through its policy of decentralisation, to devolve power and responsibility to what it saw as the key unit in the creation of a caring society — the local community. The National Crime Prevention Council was established under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister with, as vice-chairman, Gilbert Bonnemaison, the mayor of Epinay-sur-Seine, a leading exponent of social crime prevention. All major urban centres were encouraged to create their own *Conseils Communals de Prévention de la Délinquance* to bring together local councillors, representatives from government administrative departments at the city and county level, voluntary youth and social work organisations, police, prosecutors and judges. The partnership thus confronts politicians and civil servants directly with those who are obliged to sweep up the mess caused by inflexible, ignorant and insensitive decisions: Madame Alfaroba, Director of Crime Prevention of Clichy, says that 'it's proved to be a very good education for politicians'.

In Britain, effort and resources tend to be invested in isolated projects, designed to steer the behaviour of individual youngsters away from criminal activities. For the French, the exercise of searching for the causes of delinquent behaviour within individual offenders and then seeking to 'cure' them through some therapeutic or punitive action is confined to the very small number of serious or persistent offenders who pass through the children's courts. Much more important, both in terms of numbers and the investment involved, is the development of programmes designed to reduce or remove those social conditions associated with delinquency or to 'inoculate' vulnerable sectors of the community against the effects of these adverse social conditions. All children and adolescents from deprived backgrounds, and particularly those from immigrant communities living in large cities, are seen as being vulnerable.

Summer out of the city

The programme of preventative social measures began in 1982 with the *été-jeunes* operation: an immediate response to the threat of a repeat of the inner-city violence that had erupted in Marseilles and Lyons the previous summer. It took the form of a massive, nationwide deployment of money and resources to provide camps and holiday activities over the summer months for young people who would otherwise be hanging around shopping arcades, housing estates and city centres. The striking feature of the operation was not so much the nature of the activities themselves — sports, dancing, computer and video workshops — but rather the idea that they were related to policies aimed at preventing crime.

This was not merely a matter of 'getting the kids off the streets'. There was a deliberate policy of 'penetrating' immigrant and other socially isolated communities and involving the children from these communities in mainstream activities, achieved through the recruitment of the more competent and outward-looking teenagers from these communities as *animateurs* — youth activity organisers — during the summer months. Second, existing summer projects run by specialist delinquency agencies, such as the court social workers (*éducation surveillée*) and detached youth workers in the *clubs de prévention*, were incorporated in the summer programme, rather than dealing exclusively with young people who were likely to 'get into trouble', or who had already 'got into trouble'.

The success of the *été-jeunes* operations was evident both from the dramatic fall in the level of

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petty crime over the summer months and in the numbers of young people who became involved. In 1983, only one year after its initiation, over 10,000 were given holidays away from home, and 100,000 more participated in other activities. Moreover, the programmes have become increasingly elaborate and sophisticated. At Clichy, a densely populated suburb of Paris, anyone under 25 may purchase a 'passport' for ten francs (£1) which enables that young person to take part without further payment in any of the summer activities in the area.

I was most impressed not so much by the spectacular nature of the projects themselves — although many were indeed original and imaginative — but rather the firmly held belief among everyone involved — politicians, administrators, police officers and judges — that this was the right way to deal with the problem of youth crime. It is this consensus, together with the fact that those with the power and the money are willing to work together under the banner of prevention, that creates the conditions within which individual projects are devised, encouraged and supported.

The most exciting and successful projects were those which had been developed from local initiatives in response to specific problems in the area. They were often preceded by a period of research, analysis and consultation before receiving the backing of the *Conseil Communal* and financial support. For example: a theatre director and a film crew were hired to make a video drama with a group of punks and hippies who spent their time hanging around a métro station sniffing glue and drinking. The experience of working on the video film for two months helped many of these young people to lead a more stable life and to find more constructive ways of spending their time. Young people on a youth training scheme were employed to carry out the conversion work on an alcohol-free cafe which, when open, would provide full-time employment for two of them. And social workers at a community centre opened a garage on a commercial basis, offering servicing, and engine and body-work repairs and giving apprenticeships in motor mechanics and secretarial work to young people who would have had little or no chance of obtaining job training elsewhere. Youth workers were assigned to many of the projects to get to know and win the confidence of those taking part.

To appreciate the extent to which the ideology of crime prevention has won acceptance in French institutions, you only have to visit La Villette, the recently opened Parisian science museum and exhibition park. There, the Director of Security, Dr Christian Brulé, a former medical practitioner specialising in drug abuse problems, will describe the ways in which La Villette is contributing to the national crime prevention programme by offering a number of different schemes for young people coming from the neighbouring suburbs — some of the poorest in Paris.

It includes providing nine-month training courses in the La Villette complex, with the strong possibility of a permanent job at the completion of the training for unqualified young people who have been employed for at least two years. La Villette also accepts convicted offenders sentenced to community service. Of the 25 who have so far completed their service three have been offered permanent jobs and several others return to do voluntary work.

It is difficult to believe that all this is taking place a few hours' ferry trip from a country in which private security guards are a major growth industry; in which crime prevention means neighbourhood watch schemes; in which the Prime Minister refuses to accept that unemployment and poor living conditions have anything to do with crime; and in which the standard responses to young offenders are, progressively, a police caution 'treatment' designed to eliminate criminal tendencies and a spell in a detention or youth custody centre. Yet can the Tories offer a major change of policy towards youth crime? For would this not mean a radical change of direction which would have serious repercussions on other areas of government policy?

Labour's alternative presently seems threadbare. Gerald Kaufman dramatised the crime problem by telling us, in front of a giant clock, that a crime is committed every seven seconds; we need, he said, more policemen on the beat. Roy Hattersley, the new shadow Home Secretary, could do worse than take a trip to France to see what the concept of social crime prevention could offer a socialist party. □

Michael King is a senior research fellow at Brunel University.

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MEDIA

It's not the leaving of El Vino's that grieves me . . .

Robert Chesshyre

'FLEET STREET' as a geographic location for national newspapers has long been an inexact term. Those two great monuments to past glories and certainties — the *Telegraph* and *Express* buildings — remained, but for many years most journalists have made their way to less glamorous locations, such as Holborn or the Grays Inn Road.

Now, what has become known as the 'diaspora' is in full spate, and within a few months more papers will have moved, not just an inconvenient walking distance from their reporters' cherished haunts, but sufficient miles to break forever the collegiate notion of the newspaper trade.

Murdoch's unholy alliance of disparate titles has almost completed two years in Wapping; for the past few months *Telegraph* staff have sailed down the Thames in a motorised catamaran to a new paper palace beside the West India docks; the *Observer* is off to Battersea, the *Mail* to Kensington, the *Financial Times* and the *Express* will shortly move lesser distances, but across the Thames.

The upheavals have their comic and entertaining aspects. When the *Observer* move was announced, a journalists' meeting was provided with enlarged photocopies of the A-Z page covering Battersea, over which the denizens of N1 pored in perplexity as if they had been invited to relocate to Portsmouth.

I sailed last week with the 'MV Daily Telegraph', though not without some trepidation. A sister boat, I was told, had nearly foundered on its maiden voyage — deeply alarmed scribblers were ordered to put on life jackets — and there had, apparently, been a recent near miss with *HMS Belfast*.

There were ten of us in the 50-seater boat, including a reporter who had a story in that morning's *Telegraph* about the hazards of flotsam and jetsam on the Thames, a worthwhile tale he would never have stumbled across on the Number 9 bus.

It was the last day of autumn sun, and we scudded past the City's great landmarks and the busy water traffic — cement and gas carriers, a canoeing club in red and orange craft, a splendid ancient cruise boat, the *Balmoral*, sporting a Scottish flag — lacking only a guide to tell us what we saw. ('Wait for the winter,' said one observer, when I told him of my pleasant voyage, 'there'll be a few sick bags then.')

Once ashore, we walked in a straggling crocodile through Cuba Street, E14, past a former docker's pub now patronised by *Telegraph* peers — two builders sitting comfortably beside a pile of bricks wished us 'good day' — and so to a splendid building with breathtaking views of London's docklands.

> ***What is being destroyed is not merely the romance and culture of the 'street of adventure/shame', but the already limited capacity of national newspapers to break the mould of stereotypical journalism***

For most *Telegraph* staff, the novelty of that journey faded rapidly, its delights negated by the lost hours and sense of isolation. What remain are the serious questions, soon to be confronted by journalists on most papers.

The most obvious is logistical — how do writers get to places on time? The more fundamental is — what is the diaspora doing to the craft of journalism? How damaging is it for reporters to be removed from the establishment sources of news — Whitehall, the law courts, the City? Is it in fact a good thing that the cosy culture of El Vino's is being rent asunder?

The morning I was at the *Telegraph*, the newsdesk was struggling to get a reporter to the RSPCA press conference, which had been announced late. Fortunately, a court case fell through, and the reporter checked in and was reassigned. Reporters are asked to call the office before heading east from central London, and they are to be issued with 'bleepers' — 'we are trying to train them to wear them,' said a newsdesk man somewhat wearily.

The *Telegraph* is also about to open a satellite office near Old Scotland Yard for reporters who find themselves with a story to dispatch from central London. I suspect there'll be a queue of journos clutching their Tandies stretching round the block. A shrewd entrepreneur would prepare office space for the inevitable future demand by more journalists for a convenient central perch.

Several specialist writers — both at Wapping and the Isle of Dogs — told me they now think very carefully before 'going up to London' for a press conference, cutting events they would previously have attended without fail.

That may not be a great loss; a press conference is, after all, a selling exercise, attended as much for the free drink and congenial company as for the news value. But what will erode standards will be the irresistible temptation to cover real stories on the phone. Despite their popular gadabout image, reporters are reluctant at the best of times to get out of the office.

A *Times* specialist told me that there is an increasing presumption that a reporter should be seated at his terminal and by his telephone. Like counting-house clerks, they should be at their desks. It is newspaper managers who have decreed that journalists should be dumped in the back of beyond; managers find it pleasing if their wage slaves are visibly bent to their tasks. At the very least, a reporter out of the office is running up expenses.

WHICH BRINGS us to the central question. The decision to move to editorial offices was entirely a commercial one; with computer technology, there was no need for journalists to follow the printing presses. The temptation to make (or save) a lot of money by moving away outweighed any journalistic considerations.

Now, having disposed of the printers, managements with time on their hands and book-keeping in their heads are turning their attention to journalistic staffing levels. Every journalist must have a definable function; it stands to reason in the managerial mind that a reporter on the phone can get through more work than one on the loose. Staffing levels, says Tony Loynes, editor of *UK Press Gazette*, are being squeezed.

What is being destroyed is not merely the romance and culture of the 'street of adventure/shame' — the breaking up of small cliques reinforcing their prejudices and self-importance over too much champagne will be more a loss to themselves than to their readers — but the already limited capacity of national newspapers to break the mould of stereotypical journalism.

Nothing particularly fresh or original is going to occur to reporters or their editors, when they are stuck up to 11 hours a day in front of VDUs. The technology may have switched the balance of industrial power from the composing room to the editorial floor, but it does not add one iota to the quality of newspapers' contents.

> ***Nothing particularly fresh or original is going to occur to reporters or their editors when they are stuck up to 11 hours a day in front of VDUs. The technology may have switched the balance of industrial power from the composing room to the editorial floor, but it adds nothing to the quality of newspapers' contents***

The major regional centres of journalism are being rolled up: Manchester and Glasgow are shadows of their former selves; the north-east is almost entirely neglected; most national papers believe one man on a bike is sufficient to cover Scotland. Paradoxically, the diaspora of offices coincides with accelerating centralisation of news coverage.

In short, the businessmen are firmly in the saddle. Ball bearings, carpets, second-hand cars, newspapers are all now part of the same game. The consequence will be 'safe', homogenised papers staffed largely by yuppies. Not only journalists but readers will suffer from the diaspora. □

Robert Chesshyre is a staff journalist on the Observer, *and the author of* The Return of a Native Reporter.

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ECONOMICS

The evasions of a window cleaner

Jack Straw

The crucial political divide is not whether markets should exist, but what kind of society market forces will produce if left to themselves. For the right there is virtually nothing which communal, collective and democratic mechanisms can do which cannot be done better by the deregulated private market, including the provision of health care, education, and that most fundamental of the functions of the collective state, the incarceration of its lawbreakers.

For the left, while the regulated market can help to produce wealth, it cannot distribute that wealth fairly, nor meet efficiently or fairly the needs of people for social welfare in its widest sense. The challenge to the left is to define the limits of the market, to embrace it where it is sensible, to contain where it conflicts with our wider social objectives of fair life chances for a good standard of living for everyone, and the creation of that liberty which enables every citizen to reach their full potential. This much is now clear to Mikhail Gorbachev and those on the side of enlightenment in the Soviet Union. It is the social result that should be the test of a political system: not the means of achieving it.

One key aspiration of democratic socialists is to provide the widest choice. In the field of the provision of consumer goods and most other services it is beyond question that a price-determined market is the most efficient way of matching demand with supply, of satisfying the desire for choice, and of communicating consumer wishes to the providers. The experience of rigidly planned economies has not been a happy one. Karl Popper was correct when he asserted in the *Poverty of Historicism* that while it is easy to centralise power, it is far more difficult to centralise the knowledge needed to exercise that power wisely (a harsh lesson which one day this government will learn to its cost as it seeks to substitute central control over the non-market decisions of elected local councillors).

A properly regulated price-determined market, where legal blocks are put in the way of the otherwise inevitable drift to cartel and monopoly means competition, can in the right circumstances be an unquestioned spur both to efficiency and to scientific and technological invention and progress. The fact that almost every major advance in drug treatment has been made by private, profit-motivated pharmaceutical companies is not something which can lightly be brushed aside.

Where there are natural monopolies, like gas or telecommunications, a proper understanding of markets, and of the need above all to satisfy and protect the interest of the consumer, should ensure that in forming our future policies we do not once again confuse ownership with control. We once owned BP (did anyone know?): whether we controlled it is a matter of debate. The private ownership of natural monopolies is offensive to the public good, and wrong: but now that this has happened we may better achieve effective control of these monopolies by regulation rather than by the blunderbuss of renationalisation with all the attendant problems of cost, in cash, and in potential political support.

BUT FOR SOCIALISTS to acknowledge the role of the market — and then to define its limits — is quite different from any acceptance of the theory of the social market, the espousal of which by its former leader, David Owen, has proved fatal to the life chances of the Social Democratic Party. It was Sir Keith Joseph who originally proclaimed this theory in England, asserting that 'the public good is most effectively attained by allowing individual members of society to "do their own thing"', and that wider social aims could be achieved by policies which 'work with and through the market' ('Why Britain Needs a Social Market Economy', Centre for Policy Studies, 1975).

Therein lies the difference now between left and right. Any goods which are scarce have to be rationed — but should all be rationed by price, or should some be rationed by need? In education and health care, the overwhelming evidence points to rationing by need. The British health service, free at the point of use, is far more efficient than those health services which use the market. Look at the USA, where the market mechanisms conspire with the avarice of the medical profession to make the costs of their health care vastly higher as a proportion of GDP than ours.

Moreover, it is these areas that the market will usually lead to less effective consumer choice. This is as true in the field of education as in health care. Kenneth Baker's prescription for 'variety' in education, with opted-out schools and opted-out boroughs, is supposed to lead to more choice. In most cases, it will not be parents choosing schools but schools choosing parents. To the extent that parents do get a choice it may well be for one well-resourced, opted-out school and five cash-starved Local Education Authority schools. Is that choice? The voucher would reduce choice even more. Since parents would indeed have to shop around, and every school would then charge fees, it would be those parents who could supplement the voucher with extra private cash who could get the best, and those who could not who would get the rest.

There is, lastly, a great paradox in the Thatcherite position that we should relentlessly seek to expose. That is that while the right wishes for a free market in goods, it is increasingly and even more stridently demanding a monopoly in ideas. This can be seen in the concentration, the ownership and control of the press, the use of the courts to enforce censorship, the cowering of the BBC and, most revealingly, in Mrs Thatcher's wish to crush the very idea of socialism itself and her actions to disembowel the centres of opposition in the trades unions and local councils. But maybe it is not such a paradox after all. Maybe both Marx and my 'O' Level textbook were correct in teaching that, left to themselves, markets lead to monopoly power, and in thought no less than in material goods. And they call it freedom? □

Jack Straw is Labour MP for Blackburn and shadow education secretary.

MARKETS MEAN rationing. The free market is a contradiction in terms. Most markets are rigged and, unregulated, lead to monopoly.

These truths used to be absorbed by socialists along with their mother's milk and formed the basis of thousands of speeches and millions of private conversations that helped create the warmer climate for democratic socialism in the late '30s and for decades thereafter.

Today, as the left comes to terms with Thatcher's third victory, serious and sustained debate about the nature of markets and their relationship to our ideology seems to be needed. Those who talk of accommodating ourselves to the market economy get accused of selling out to Thatcherism or, worse, to the social market ideas of Keith Joseph and David Owen; while those who fail to engage these questions tend to confirm the grotesque parody that pure socialism will only have arrived when *everything* is nationalised and under state control. *We need a view of the role of markets within a democratic socialist framework, both so that we can be convincing in our support for the idea of a mixed economy, and so that we can defeat the now triumphal assertion of the Tory right that private markets can deliver both wealth and welfare.*

Markets mean rationing because markets can only exist where goods are scarce, where more people want them than can have them. The 'free market' in a literal sense is a contradiction because markets do not exist where goods are free. The rigging of markets takes place at every level and the tendency to cartel or monopoly where the market is left to itself, unregulated, is overwhelming — though the players in the market will use different language to justify their actions, usually the need for an 'orderly' market.

Try selling newspapers outside Oxford Circus Underground and see how long you survive, even if a supply can be obtained in the first place. Robert Maxwell's *London Daily News* was killed as much by pressure from the *London Standard* at the point of distribution as it was by the error of multiple editions. The new species of hero of the Tory party conference, the one-man window cleaner, is almost certainly a member of a tidy little arrangement about territory (in my constituency the arrangements are highly formalised in a federation); and the progress of contract cleaning in the NHS tells its own tale. Mergers, takeovers and other predatory activities have now left just two companies, BET and the Hawley Group, dominant in the 'free' market. Moreover, the word now is that these two companies are seeking some 'understanding' about minimum wage rates to secure that lovely 'orderly' market, and, no doubt, to protect their profits as well.

IN POLITICS, to concede the language is to concede the case. Words and the images they convey are our only weapon. To challenge the term 'free market' is not to indulge in sophistry, but to deny the powerful linkage between the two words, that markets mean freedom, and that freedom means markets. Markets and freedom *can* sit happily side by side, but the idea that the private price-determined market leads automatically to freedom may strike the slum-dweller in Pinochet's market-worshipping Chile as a little odd. Indeed, the mistake that the left has made has been not only to concede the notion of the 'free' market, but also the other insinuation of the right, that markets and socialism are inherently incompatible.

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No one is surrendering here

HUGH O'SHAUGHNESSY *reports on war weariness, and hopes of peace in Nicaragua*

BY THE TIME you read this the pound will probably be worth 27,000 cordobas on the black market in Managua. When I was there this month it was worth only 25,000. (For years under Somoza you could never get more than about 15 to the pound sterling.) Queue at the petrol station with your ration coupon in your hand and, at the official price of 1,000 cordobas, a gallon of petrol will cost you less than four pence. Down at the Mercado Oriental, the heaving open market where anything can be bought, a drink of Coca-Cola—poured into a transparent plastic bag to save bottles—will cost you a good bit more.

Don't expect too much from the ordinary supermarkets. There is usually a good selection of fruit, vegetables and meat but in the absence of many consumer goods a disproportionate number of the shelves are taken up with slow-moving bottles of Nicaraguan-made Worcester sauce and locally produced squeegees.

But take your dollars to the Diplotienda and you will be able to shop for Toblerone and Chablis, motorbikes and cases of prime Nicaraguan steaks in air-conditioned quiet and a good deal more comfort than among the smelly, muddy stalls of the Mercado Oriental. In the small bar adjoining, the young rakes of Managua, yuppies from the quietly prosperous private sector, sip their scotches as they watch *Platoon* on the video.

There is a headlong flight from the local currency in Nicaragua, hyperinflation, as the government struggles with worst effects of the campaign President Ronald Reagan's men are paying the Contras to wage against them. And with a US trade boycott the Nicaraguans must harvest every scrap of foreign currency they can.

Jaime Wheelock, one of the *commandantes* and the minister of agriculture, put it in a nutshell. 'As far as the budget is concerned all the ordinary income of the government goes on the costs of the war. But we can't just ignore the duties of government. Consequently we have to go into the red because we've got to finance production projects, maintain education, health and other government costs. To do that we have to print money and that generates inflation.'

The military situation is under control and the first priority, that of securing the territory of the republic against the invader, is by and large being met. The army, the Ejercito Popular Sandinista, or EPS, run by Humberto Ortega, President Daniel Ortega's brother, naturally has the best of everything. Its morale high, it is performing with an efficiency that will repay study by military historians when the war is over. No town or village in Nicaragua has been held by the terrorists for more than a day or two. Mostly they are kept on the run as their morale falters.

The diplomatic front is also being held, and even pushed forward. The Central American presidents' meeting at Esquipulas in Guatemala on 7 August was the point at which the leaders of the isthmus realised that there was no alternative for them but peace in their countries. The US policy of seeking the military overthrow of the Nicaraguan government and the military defeat of the left-wing insurgents in El Salvador was bringing nothing but destruction, poverty and chaos to their countries. 'At Esquipulas they finally discovered they could do something on their own. The effect was electric,' commented one European diplomat.

With the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Costa Rican president, with the White House giving the impression that it is unsure what to do next, with the conduct of Elliot Abrams, the chief Reagan hawk, under investigation and with the US Congress and people still in a majority opposed to continuing aid to the terrorists, the future for the Contras looks gloomy.

Knowing that Nicaragua's salvation lies in an end to the war, the Sandinistas are making sure that no one will be able to accuse them of going against the spirit of Esquipulas. A conciliation commission has been appointed with Cardinal Obando, a critic of the Sandinistas, as a member, amnesty has been extended to those Contras giving themselves up and a unilateral ceasefire decreed by the government in some of the areas of worst fighting.

The Sandinistas have avoided one trap set for them by the Reagan administration. The Nicaraguans have not developed into the authoritarian Leninist monster against which President Reagan would like to be battling in the cause of liberty. 'We're not going to let this place get like Vietnam and lose all foreign sympathy,' say the *commandantes* privately.

The dominance of the FSLN, the Sandinista Front, has, nevertheless, less to do with the virtues and efficiencies of its members than with the fact that there is little or no alternative. The Contras with Colonel Enrique Bermudez, late of Somoza's National Guard, at their head and the civilian leadership in Miami clearly both corrupt and incompetent, can claim no legitimacy and are supported by only a tiny minority of Nicaraguans.

Violent overthrow

A fortnight ago several hundred of them gathered in the hot afternoon sun in the grounds of the US embassy at a political rally. They were addressed by an opposition politician called Huembes and Mrs Jeane Kirkpatrick, President Reagan's former envoy to the United Nations and friend of Leopoldo Galtieri. In stumbling Spanish she called for the successful invasion of Nicaragua and the violent overthrow of its government. There was a jazz band, a tame monsignor to give the 'blessing', free rum and miniature stars and stripes on offer to be waved by the guests. The rules of diplomatic conduct cannot have been more blatantly flouted since the Iranians took over the US embassy in Tehran.

Apart from the pro-Contra claque the political parties, the traditional Liberals and Conservatives and the latecomers such as the Social Christians and the various Leninist splinters, are allowed to function with a freedom not seen in East Europe, Russia or China. Drive round Managua and you will see great hoardings exhorting you to support the Social Christians or the Liberals. Go to the party headquarters and you will find no secret policemen at the door. After a period in which the pro-Contra newspaper *La Prensa* was clumsily banned by the government it is back on the streets this month. It is not an edifying read. The political parties' trouble is not lack of liberty: it is lack of competence. Each of the main groups is split into factions following this or that minor political *caudillo*. None provides any plausible and coherent alternative to the FSLN. They might in the future, not today.

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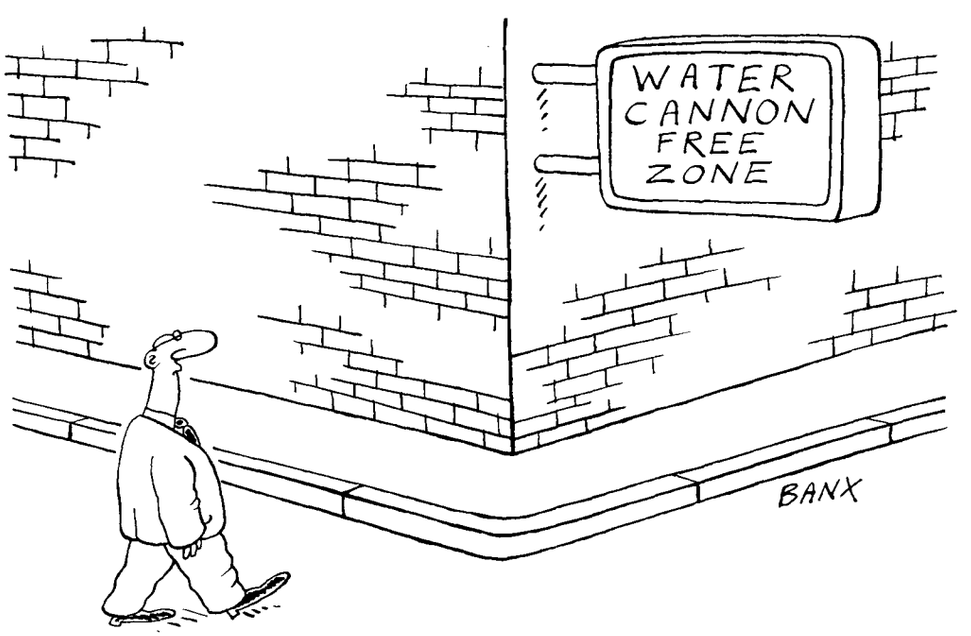

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ESSAY

Unstately pleasure dome

If postmodern art appears to be meaningless chaos, this is partly because it is precisely that — but partly, argues* ZYGMUNT BAUMAN, *because the critics ignore the fact that culture has got a new master

'POSTMODERNISM' STANDS for confusion. The question is, whose confusion?

Art critics and social analysts who announce the advent of postmodernity sometimes bewail the dissipation of cultural values and artistic standards, sometimes rejoice in the new freedom of creation and equality of tastes. They agree, however, that the confusion that all this arises from or brings about is a feature of contemporary art: it is the artistic culture of our times which is confused.

'Confusion' is shorthand for lack of direction; or shapelessness; or unpredictability; or, most probably, for all three. Art is now like Stockhausen's score: there is no way one can predict from a string of sounds what the next sound is likely to be. Today's art is fond of *collage*: the bringing together, at random and at the artist's whim, of bits and pieces which do not belong together and which are brought together only to declare that belonging together does not matter. Today's art is fond of *pastiche*: that irreverent gesture towards other times, other places, other properties, through which distinctions between stealing, borrowing and making anew are lost, as if to promote the idea that only lack of originality can be truly original and that 'being new' means to refuse to tell the difference between new and old. Today's art is brazenly *eclectic*: it seems promiscuous, like pre-Aids sex. There are no styles or schools left; no purities to be defended. Everything is mixable, everything mixes with everything else, everything better *be* mixed.

As if this were not confusing enough, today's art seems to be bent on denying itself; or on denying anything else, which amounts to much the same. In her *Has Modernism Failed?* (Thames & Hudson) Suzanne Gablik gathered quite a collection of disappearing acts. One artist (Rauschenberg) presents as a work of art the act of erasing someone else's drawing; another (Klein) invites the *crème de la crème* of Parisian society to a private view of an empty gallery; yet another (de Maria) digs a deep hole in a field and covers it tightly with a lid so it cannot be seen. Today's art is *self-referential* — and treats its self-referentiality as a declaration of war. It is war on the obligation to 'represent', to 'have a function', to change something, to preseve something else; it's war on obligation itself, on the idea that art owes something to somebody, that it can be compared to or measured by something which is not art (or, for that matter, by some other art). Like Jahve, postmodern art would answer Moses' anguished 'Who are you?' with a cool 'I am who I am'.

It's no wonder that art critics, aestheticians, social analysts and philosophers find the postmodern scene confusing. They used to have the first and the last say in deciding what is and what is not art. They used to make binding pronouncements on the difference between good and bad art. They used to domesticate even the wildest artistic inventions by segregating everything artistic into neat little boxes of schools or styles. They used to shelve the boxes in an order so logical that no one would have the temerity to challenge it: from old to new, from retrograde to progressive, from low to high. They used to believe, from Schleiermacher on, that they understood the work of art much better than its author did. They developed skills and tools which served such practices well, and were proud of them. Now, suddenly, the tools do not cut and the skills cannot make them cut.

To define is to master. To classify is to control. To judge is to dominate. To speak with authority is to silence the others. To make the narrative is to be in charge of the reality of which the narrative speaks. Critics and philosophers who defined, classified, judged, were in charge of art. The soothing 'orderliness' of the pre-postmodern art came from *their* orderly narrative; the 'logic' of its development was the logic of *their* theory. An unmistakable hierarchy of artistic excellence was born of *their* authority. Without such authority, hierarchy crumbles, logic is no more and order turns into chaos. To describe postmodern artistic culture as confused is the last, desperate attempt to speak with authority; yet it is the issue of authority which is confused. People who grew used to legislating can now only describe; and to take a descriptive stance means to acknowledge the authority of the described. But if postmodern artistic culture defies the ordering ambitions of the theorists, where has the ordering power moved?

Marcia Eaton's study, with the promising but, in the end, frustrating title *Art and Non-Art* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press), ends with the following sentences: 'If Roberta Peters utters a moose call in her concert tonight, has she sung a song? Perhaps we'll have to wait for tomorrow's reviews to find out.' What Eaton tells us is that the theorists' craving for conceptual elegance is left unsatisfied — and that newspapers have usurped the right to classify. What she does *not* tell us is that journalists should be equally unsure of their capacity to confirm or deny the right of the moose call to song status. No one, in fact, can be sure — and, for all practical purposes, this has ceased to matter.

Loss of power

It would have mattered, were culture still occupying the same place in the fullness of things that it did when the skills and the habits of the cultural legislators were formed. But ours is no longer a time for power-supported cultural crusades, for domination hanging on the cultural uniformity of the dominated, for governments depending on the popular enthusiasm for legitimating formulae and value clusters. If culture was ever the activity through which systemic order was sustained and reproduced, it has certainly lost this role with the advent of methods less trouble-prone and more effective, like seduction-through-consumerism and repression-through-welfare. Culture need no longer support the power structure; it can no longer harm it, either.

And, for this reason, it is free, as never before, from political supervision. The age-old dream of the intellectuals has finally come true: culture has

'Ahh! At last, the alternative jester . . .!'

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its autonomy. It does not take orders from political or religious authorities. It can do, and does, whatever it likes . . .

Well, as a matter of fact, it does not. The moment that it was freed from the political reformatory, artistic culture fell into the loving yet firm embrace of another guardian. It now belongs to the consumer market. Indeed, it is its showpiece; its most glittering, alluring and prized possession. Artistic culture did not go mad; or, if there *is* madness, there is method in it: the market method. Far from inheriting the uniformising ambitions of early-modern intellectuals, market thrives on multiplicity of needs and diversity of taste. If it plays such a successful role in securing peace and order for a blatantly unjust society, it's precisely because it provides a shelter for individual freedom and autonomy, evicted from the more important sites of control over production, or political rule. Market does not replicate the system; market supports the system by complementing it, by catering for those drives and ambitions that the rest of the system has declared out of bounds: freedom of choice, sovereignty of the individual, autonomy of decision, mastery over one's life-world. It is as a consumer that the individual becomes free, sovereign, autonomous.

In its consumer form, freedom is — for the first time in its tortured history — fit to be practised by all but the very poorest. In its past incarnations, freedom was a proposition for the heroic few. It came together with a life full of uncertainty, unshared responsibility and insoluble moral doubts; its distance from solitude was too small for comfort. Consumer freedom, on the contrary, comes like anything else in the supermarket in a 'new and improved', sanitised form, thoroughly cleansed of ingredients which could 'damage the health' of the consumer — and, by the same token, of the market. This is a freedom that needn't be paid for with uncertainty. This is a free choice that needn't be repented. This is a self-identity that needn't surrender social approval. In the consumer market, freedom has found the practical resolution of antinomies that philosophers despaired of resolving in theory.

The tampon solution

Together with choice come advice and reassurance. Are you afraid of freedom? Don't you trust your reason? Stop worrying, look: this man in the laboratory has just tested the product and there is the supreme reason, Science, speaking through his lips. Or have a look yourself: here is the girl, lonely and sad; but now she slips a couple of tampons in her bag and she is again with her boy, laughing and kissing. Is not the tampon a rational solution to her problems? Or perhaps you are afraid that, as a free person, you will have to swim against the current? Again, there's no reason to worry: more and more people switch to X. You can have freedom, rationality and social approval — at the same time. No wonder that consumer freedom is the most attractive, seductive freedom yet invented. No wonder that it is the first freedom to be tolerated, even encouraged, by an economically unequal and politically polarised society.

Now that it is part of the world of consumption, artistic culture absorbs its rationality, yardsticks and logic. Far from being in a state of chaos, it is closely following the rules of a game. Only this is not the game of the critics and philosophers of art (though there is a standing invitation for them to join, on the managers' conditions, which some of them do). Now cultural choice, like any other, must be free: that is, no opprobrium must be attached to any preference. The cultural consumer must make his/her choices convinced that he/she is sovereign to make them on his/her own; that individual autonomy is reasserted in every choice. Artistic taste, like any other commodity-orientated taste, must remain the stuff of which selves and identities are built. No room here for the domination of 'objective standards' and 'transcultural' principles of beauty.

Instead, the only measure of a cultural commodity is market success — measured by the number of gold discs, box-office returns, place on the bestseller list; or measured by the personal wealth accumulated by the author or performer. As Margaret Thatcher has said, 'The stock exchange cannot be wrong.' Like most of her statements, this was the statement of a populist opinion, of a view shared by more people than the millions who vote her into power. It 'stands to reason' that the wealth of the artist shows that many people are ready to pay for his or her work; and they cannot be all wrong. Measured by wealth, the reputation of the artist serves also as an insurance against error for the customers, collectors, fans, enthusiasts. Money, and money only, compares the incomparable, measures the incommensurable, brings together the incompatible. Who says there is no hierarchy in postmodern culture?

Unlike that operated by the intellectual elite, the market-operated system for the arts is democratic, aimed at mass consumption, tolerant of diversity of taste, willing to cater for any (not just the chosen) minority taste. It satisfies every need: of experiment and of certainty, of uniqueness and of togetherness, of individuality and of communal approval. Having lowered the price of cultural dissent, having separated idiosyncrasy from ostracism, it revokes all bans and rescinds all inhibitions. Here, at last, is a vast territory where battles can be fought, reputations sought, selves asserted — and all without the slightest harm done to the domination and security of the systemic order.

> ***'You can have freedom, rationality and social approval — at the same time. No wonder that consumer freedom is the most seductive freedom yet invented . . . the first to be tolerated by an economically unequal, politically polarised society'***

Safeguarded by the services that it offers, simultaneously, to the individual and the power system, commercialised culture need not fear the sermons of expropriated critics. The narratives which give form and structure to reality are now made elsewhere; in Régis Debray's felicitous phrase, ours is the 'mediocratic' age. Media do not report reality: they make it. 'Events' which constitute reality take shape through the media; some have none other but media existence. And media-created reality is essentially dramatic: it consists of repeatable, hence non-irrevocable, non-conclusive episodes (could Judas ask Jesus 'Can we start again, please?' in any but the television age?); it exists in a frame, which makes it self-enclosed, allows it to be self-referential and protects it from tests other than internal plausibility. The time-honoured distinctions between fantasy and reality (in style, in narrative rules, in epistemology) are thereby blurred; or, rather, made meaningless. Art is like reality; art *is* reality, for the simple reason that reality has become art. Flexible, fast moving, never final, always 'until further notice', propelled by its inner impulse alone, propagating itself through pastiche, collage, self-reference . . . Is it postmodern art? Is it postmodern reality? Does it matter?

Inside Thélème

It does, but not necessarily in the way close to the hearts of art philosophers. Its importance is not that of fine conceptual distinction but of the diagnosis needed by those who wish to understand and those who want to act. Artistic culture is postmodern, and likely to remain such, as long as it is blended with media-operated, market-guided reality. There is little point in castigating the ignorance of gallery owners, the gullibility of their customers or the artists who 'forget their duties'. Arts are at home in the consumer market as long as the market is the home of the consumer; and as long as men and women of this capitalist society of ours are, first and foremost, consumers.

Postmodern culture appears confused to people who still expect order in the shape of schools, styles and traditions — forms construed and sustained by the narrative that *they* initiate and control. But the confusion resides in mistaking the arts of the consumer era for those once serving the 'distinction game' of the status-greedy elite. Today's arts can be unerstood (or influenced, if this is what one wants) only in their new systemic location, and in the light of their new function.

The postmodern, consumer reality (in which the arts dissolve) starts where Rabelais' *Pantagruel* ends: with the construction of the Abbey de Thélème, that home of gracious living where the pursuit of happiness is a moral duty, suffering a sin, wealth a virtue and poverty . . . Well, the gist of Thélème is that it keeps poverty on the other side of the walls. In Thélème, poverty is invisible. One does not need to remember where all this wealth and happiness and civilised manners and good humour come from. Its elegant life, itself a work of art, depends on high walls and well guarded gates. More than that: it depends on forgetting its dependence.

Consumer society improved on Thélème and found a surer way of forgetting. The poverty which conjured up our pursuit of consumer happiness we flush down the toilet of inner-city sweat-shops, or — better still — the shacks of non-unionised labour of Malaysia or Thailand. No bad smell, no ugly sights. Out: poverty, repression, fight for survival. In: unlimited cultural choice, unrestrained freedom of taste, the fight for self-improvement. Inside our version of Thélème, the advent of postmodern culture may well seem the second coming of Prometheus. Outside? Well, the greatest blessing among Prometheus' gifts is that one does not know of any outside anymore. □

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ARTS

ART

Birth of a nation

John Spurling

Manners and Morals: Hogarth and British Painting 1700-60
Tate

AT THE HEART of the Tate's brave survey of an unpopular period of British art is Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital. By a strange chance the efforts of a retired sea-captain to do something about the abandoned children dying in London's streets coincided and crossed paths with the efforts of William Hogarth and several other British artists to pull themselves up by their own boot-straps.

The royal and aristocratic patrons of the 17th century had had high and expensive tastes in art and bought mainly from foreign artists. The new, incipiently bourgeois patrons of the early 18th century seem to have had little or no aesthetic interest and required no more than visual records of themselves, their families and their properties. The artists they commissioned were often British, but exceedingly primitive. The scene was dominated by the highly professional, plodding German portraitist, Sir Godfrey Kneller, and the insipid English muralist, Sir James Thornhill, who made up in hustling for commissions (St Paul's, Greenwich Hospital, Guildhall) what he lacked in imagination. Both, however, were also teachers. Kneller was the governor and Thornhill one of the directors of the first academy of art in England, founded in 1711, and Thornhill also ran an academy of his own at the back of his house. One of those using its facilities was Hogarth, who married Thornhill's daughter, inherited the fittings of his 'life room' and, in 1735, set up his own academy in St Martin's Lane, where a previous academy specialising in 'drawing from the Naked' had collapsed when the treasurer embezzled the subscriptions.

Gradually, therefore, a community of artists was being formed and the idea growing that there could be native artists of a more ambitious kind. For the present-day viewer it's distinctly depressing to see how accomplished a second-rate artist like Francis Hayman looks in the company of most of his mid-century contemporaries, but the particular virtue of this large exhibition is that things can only improve as you get further into it. There is also an irresistibly sympathetic catalogue by Elizabeth Einberg, who writes about all her artists and sitters — be they never so ham-fisted or unattractive — with impartial historical zeal.

Allan Ramsay and the young Gainsborough and Reynolds do much to light up the later galleries, but the star exhibitor is, of course, Hogarth. He is represented not only by several masterly portraits and that extraordinary combination of portraiture, still-life and narrative content, 'The Graham Children', but also by three

Every portrait tells a story: Hogarth's 'The Graham Children' (1742)

of his social morality sequences: 'The Rake's Progress', 'The Four Times of the Day' and 'The Election'. No doubt these contain an element of caricature but, seen among the stiff, deferential images of upper-class English life supplied by most of his contemporaries, they look painfully and comically like real life. Just as the dapper young executives in car ads are always speeding along empty roads — whereas we all, however high-powered our vehicles, actually sit in fuming jams — so even smug little squires posed coolly in their spacious grounds or drawing-rooms with their washed-out wives and heirs around them must in fact have passed a lot of their time in Hogarthian conditions of noise and confusion.

The exhibition begins with Edmund Lilly's full-length portrait of the overweight Queen Anne. It's a sophisticated piece of painting compared with much that follows, but the egg-shaped, mask-like face in the style of Kneller is perfectly expressionless, the hands emerge like those of a statue from the voluminous blue and ermine robe and the painting's only purpose seems to be to symbolise royalty by presenting the sitter in the role of Juno, queen of the Olympian gods. Ten rooms and 56 years on the full-length of George II by Robert Edge Pine, Reynolds' and Gainsborough's contemporary, is perhaps the most lifelike and earthbound royal portrait ever painted — except by Goya half a century on. It shows a frail but still domineering old man, one hand stuffed behind his garter ribbon, bags under the eyes, cheeks sagging and thin lips just parted as he turns to say something humorous or possibly sarcastic to an invisible attendant.

Half-way round the exhibition, the fulcrum between these two monarchs of different worlds, hangs Hogarth's portrait of Captain Coram, seated like a king in a great red coat, with a globe at his feet and the seal of the Foundling Hospital's Royal Charter — which he had doggedly pursued for 17 years — in his hand, but with the kind, lively face of a friend. Indeed, he gives the unusual impression — for a painted image — of listening to you as you look at him. Hogarth's prime contribution to the revolution in British painting is epitomised by this portrait of 1740: he married the plainness of reality to the grandeur of high art as effectively as Samuel Richardson married Pamela, the lady's maid, to her gentleman pursuer Mr B in the bestselling novel published the same year.

Captain Coram's unintentional contribution came about through his friendship with Hogarth, who was one of the first Governors of the Foundling Hospital and who roped in his fellow-artists, including the 20-year-old Gainsborough and the 33-year-old Richard Wilson, to donate paintings to decorate the hospital's walls. People came to see them and the artists realised the possibilities, indeed the necessity of a public exhibition-space. The eventual outcome, just beyond the limits of this show, was the foundation of the Royal Academy. □

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Gavin Millar talks about the NFT

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TELEVISION

Peter the Great

Hugo Williams

READERS OF the *New Statesman* may not know that historian Christopher Andrew, presenter of *Images of the Revolution* on **Timewatch** (BBC2), possesses a 'celebrated smile' (John Naughton in the *Observer).* He was probably smiling it as he watched the fifth part of **Peter Ustinov's Russia** (BBC2), which covered the same ground as his own amazing revelations. Sure enough, shots from Eisenstein's *October* of a panic-stricken but well-choreographed populace streaming across Red Square, used by documentarists for years as if they were newsreel footage, duly turned up in that guise in Ustinov's version of events. Collapse of stout party.

According to Andrew, Eisenstein used live ammunition in his film and the 'shooting' actually caused more casualties than the October Revolution itself. One woman only found out about the revolution by having her Pekingese shot as a 'bourgeois dog'. 'They didn't so much storm the Winter Palace as raid the wine cellars', claims eye-witness emigré Sofka Skipwith (also in the *Observer).* It seems that Trotsky's presence in that famous photograph wasn't the only thing about the peoples' revolution that was retouched. One old aristo remembered watching from a window as a crowd of people led by a young man with a red ribbon wrapped round his sword approached a Cossack guard who welcomed them with a similarly decorated weapon. 'I wonder where he got the ribbon from,' said the boy's nanny. 'I suppose he had it in his pocket in case he had to surrender.' 'Our circle was very happy about the revolution,' said someone else. 'There was no perceptible change. People in the streets were eating and spitting sunflower seeds.'

In the light of the new information starting to come out about 1917, the figure of Lenin becomes increasingly ambiguous and may yet yield room to his old comrade. (One boy thought his leader's name was Lenin-Trotsky). When Lenin heard about the revolution from exile his first reaction had been that it was an Anglo-French plot to keep Russia in the war. With the excuse that the Germans were pressing on Petrograd, the Bolsheviks seized power from the provisional government and with minority support set about inventing the Revolution with the aid of their great propagandist, Eisenstein. The myth of a righteous majority overpowering a corrupt minority still underpins the Soviet regime, so it will be interesting to see just how far the revelations of the new 'openness' can go.

Clearly Peter Ustinov is one aspect of it, but his insights and anecdotes lean towards the esoteric and I might have been more confused without my *Timewatch* to consult. 'But *when* did Rasputin send this apple to the Czar?' I wanted to ask. As was to be expected, Ustinov himself proved somewhat larger than the revolution, especially in its new, diminished format. But even he was seriously upstaged by his various coloured jackets which changed places with one another unpredictably. I finally got the idea that these valiantly-cut items were used in rotation, just as the fields used to be: while one is on camera, the other is lying fallow, resting from its considerable duties. More worryingly, Ustinov's rifle-slit eyes were ideal camouflage for autocue reading in sunshine, but when they emerged from their sandbags for indoor work they seemed to lag behind the autocue and looked unexpectedly panicky. Can this really be?

I suppose everyone except me knew that Britain, France, Canada, America and Japan all had troops on Russian soil after the Great War in their attempt to nip the revolution in its bud. They certainly have not forgotten it in Russia and Ustinov suggested that much of present-day rancour goes back to those postwar interventions. He ended, in yet another jacket, with an impassioned plea for us to see Russia, the most-invaded country this century, as suffering from a justified paranoia.

Further witnesses to Mother Russia's essential cuddliness appeared in *The Arts and Glasnost* on **Omnibus** (BBC1). 'I want to invite you to Russia in these revolutionary times,' said an excited artist just now being shown for the first time. 'We are happy. Life is becoming like a firework.' (He blew some glitter into the air.) It seems that things have changed greatly since a public exhibition was bulldozed into the mud in 1974. The all-arts 'Hermitage' group openly confronts Soviet history, as in the comic-strip graphic which takes Malievitch's black square as its hero 'Modern Art', boldly confronting Kruschev who thought all such stuff was 'dogshit'.

There may well be a revolution going on in Soviet culture the like of which has not been seen since 1917 (when the Russians led the way into Abstraction), but the most striking aspect of it so far is its chaotic schoollessness: a sign of virility no doubt. You've never seen such a range of junk as appeared here, from megalomaniac Sgt Pepper-style collage to niggly photo-realism, all of it 'contemporary'. My favourite was Kabokov, *eminence grise* of the Hermitage group, who deals openly with 'banality'. 'When an artist finds his work banal and boring, as I do,' he said, 'he places on it these pieces of coloured tissue paper to give it a cheerful and optimistic air.' It seemed a sensible course of action.

There was recently in Moscow the first public auction of work since 1917, presided over by an auctioneer who has spent his time till now selling horses. One large bad painting went for £200. 'How wonderful it will be when a normal public can respond normally to normal work,' said one ingenuous artist. There may yet prove to be more to this *glasnost* business than meets the eye. □

'This is Brother Thomas, our deep fat friar.'

PHOTOGRAPHY

Room for a view

Liz Heron

Our Space in Britain
Camerawork, London E2, until 5 November

ON THE JOURNEY EAST through the City to Camerawork in Bethnal Green the arrogance is palpable. In this square mile of concentrated Thatcherism the trespasser needs no further proof of who Britain belongs to these days.

The loud, sharp-elbowed self-importance of all that new money speaks volumes about the state of a nation whose ability to fashion innumerable categories of outsider has already been perfected

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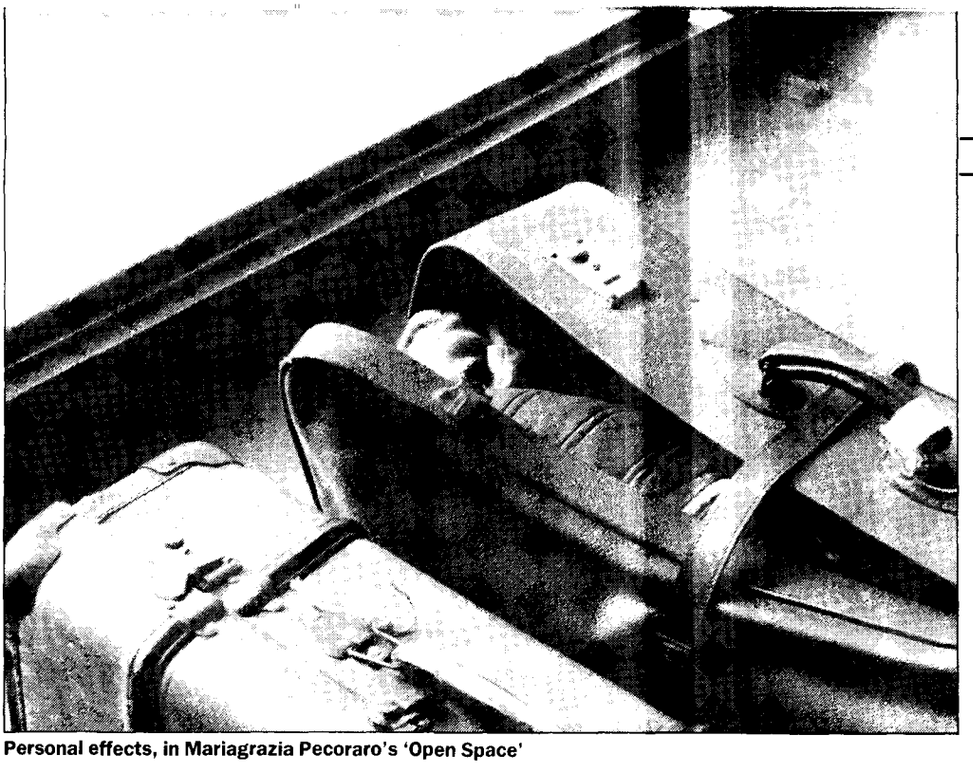

Personal effects, in Mariagrazia Pecoraro's 'Open Space'

with both brutality and supreme subtlety. By the time I get to Roman Road, the quiet challenge of Camerawork's current exhibition, produced by nine 'migrant, immigrant and black women photographers', is all the more surprising. Their roots are in Colombia, Kenya, Grenada, Puerto Rico, Brazil, Pakistan, Cyprus, Portugal and Sicily; all live in Britain. Hard though it must be to be marginal in a country that, post-Falklands, has fully licensed xenophobia and called it patriotism, this show asserts not only a hard-won cultural presence, but proves that very marginality to be a source of perceptions the more alert for being well schooled in difference and separation.

This is a workshop show, given support and overall coherence through the shared process of more than a year's weekly meetings that combined discussion and the learning of skills, creating a space free of dominant cultural assumptions. The workshop's organiser, Maria Luiza Carvalho, writes in her catalogue introduction: 'Most of us have had the experience of attending British educational institutions for an art or photography course. And most of us came out dissatisfied with their limiting space, particularly for those of us who did not have our early education in this country.'

Flowering within that shared context is a strong diversity and individuality. The 'Space' claimed here is in all cases a space of belonging, though it may be with painful ambivalence. But the meanings that pervade it are intricate. Space is both literal and metaphorical, the lineaments of identity shifting across cultures and to be grasped in the gap between them: memories, landscapes, patterns, the everyday moorings of friends and home. Lucia Ines Molina makes an intensely personal inventory of daily surroundings, hinting intriguingly at how identity resides in the singularity of objects and interiors. The eloquence of these images — the coat that hangs unmistakably awaiting its wearer; the double shadowed shape of a bag hooked on a door handle; a kettle on a shelf; the view from a kitchen window — is heightened by the knowledge of how private space matters when public space may be alien or excluding.

Next to them, Jacqueline Morán Daubercies' pictures celebrate a spirited communality, capturing the gaiety of women at Latin American social gatherings in London. Maria Luiza Carvalho's slide tape matches joyous samba music with swirling colour superimpositions of carnival in Bahia and Minas Gerais. For Carvalho it marks a dual reclamation of celebratory space, both for herself and for the dancers, for whom it 'reconstructs freedom, outside time and space, no rules, no bosses'. It's friendship that's celebrated in Samena Rana's warm colour portraits.

Memory and association furnish continuities. Joy Lahumbu finds these through unlikely affinities of landscape; the long wild horizons of Scottish Jura, where she spends her holidays, remind her, as nowhere else, of her native Kenya. With a marvellous simplicity, her grey-toned prints pinned against the jewelled colours of a Kenyan fabric open out the conventions of landscape picturing. Lucy Ann Sylvester detects troubling images in the unsuspected — the traces of a slave-ship in the form of an inverted fairground structure. Catarina dos Santos gives suggestive form to the haze of childhood memory in a series of surreally skewed fragments of interiors, while her colleagues rework the familiar Marian iconography of Catholicism.

It's the burden of tradition and its contradictions that informs the work of Mariagrazia Pecoraro and Xenia Demetriou. Pecoraro was born in Northern Italy into a Sicilian family (already a vast cultural gap); her transparent-sheeted installation 'Open Space' intimates the near invisible web of the cultural and the personal that holds in place a particular sense of female identity. In Demetriou's sequence of symbolic picture/texts 'They make kebabs . . . don't they?' the double-binds of cultural transition are highlighted; for younger women, hostages to a sexual and social morality handed down from elsewhere, and for older women, denied respect in low-status work.

It's in the nature of a workshop that room is made for different levels of experience and technical competence to come together, and these disparities are apparent: some of the participants were trained fine artists or photographers while others started out as near beginners. But what counts most of all and makes this show so pleasurable and moving is the richness of individual imagery and of the ensemble; it denies the reductive annexing of experience so often implied in the label 'ethnic minority'.

One of the participants, Samena Rana, offers an additional perspective on her work in an article in the recently published journal *Polareyes* describing the problem of restricted darkroom access for disabled photographers. Edited by the Black Women and Photography Group, *Polareyes* is packed with interviews and personal accounts supplying an expansive range of contexts for the varied photographic work that's reproduced, from Afro-Caribbean Britain to Asian Canada and Aboriginal Australia. The whole notion of cultural boundaries fixed by geography slides away here.

Both *Polareyes* (£1.50 from Turnaround Distribution, 27 Horsell Rd, London N15 1XL) and *Our Space in Britain* explore the nature of displacement and belonging for those culturally subordinated by race or the fact of migration. For all of us feeling less and less at home in Britain, there's much to learn here. □

The Our Space in Britain *exhibitors discuss their work at 6.30 on Wednesday 4 November. For details of this and of other talks and workshops (including one for gay and lesbian photographers) ring 01-980 6256.*

ARCHITECTURE

Distant prospects

Jules Lubbock

A WONDERFUL new public view of St Paul's Cathedral from the South Bank next to Blackfriars Bridge and the Oxo Tower (another favourite London landmark) was opened last week. More precisely, it was *re*-opened after being closed to public view by wharves and warehouses for almost two centuries.

This is, moreover, no ordinary view but the most magnificent of all, seen from such a position that the two bizarre, almost gothic, towers seem to stand to the left of the dome like a pair of sentinels blowing an elaborate architectural fanfare to the dome itself, rising in all its noble simplicity on the crest of Ludgate Hill to a height of almost 500 feet above the level of the Thames.

To whom do we owe the reinstatement of this small and mercifully almost unencumbered view of our capital's skyline, the very symbol of the endurance of the British people in the face of Nazism, which has, nonetheless, since been so shamefully mutilated by the City towers? The television news was silent; it just said that a further stretch of the Thames walkway had been opened, as if it were all part of the great programme of Metropolitan Improvements created by the government. In fact the view is seen from a new riverside garden, part of the first phase of the Coin Street development, achieved only after 13 years of unremitting campaigns by the Association of Waterloo Groups, first against plans for a multi-storey hotel by Gerald Ronson's Heron Corporation and then against a projected 20-storey slab of offices designed by my old friend, the Cossack of Coin Street himself, Richard Rogers, for Stuart Lipton, then of Greycoats. Lipton is now planning to vandalise the immediate precinct of St Paul's, Paternoster Square, with a scheme to which the Cossack is

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supposedly contributing — though we cannot be sure since the competition for an architect was held in secret!

History, then, is already being suppressed just as it has been in the case of London's very first public square and recreation ground at Moorfields, likewise created by community action as long ago as 1605. It is important to emphasise that community action has always been concerned with providing for social need which includes, as in this case, both low-rise cooperative housing *and* public open space as well as the restoration of our architectural heritage, like the view of St Paul's. The right should not be permitted a monopoly on heritage issues.

For it has been, above all, the working-class inhabitants of the Thameside boroughs who have been shut out from the riverbank and its beautiful prospects, particularly by this government's policies, notably via the London Docklands Development Corporation. Here, at Coin Street, in terraced houses with private and public gardens, is an indication of how London's docklands might have been redeveloped to the benefit of all — locals, office workers and visitors. Furthermore these new residential streets link up with and rebuild the pattern of the terraced streets to the south and those which formerly stood on the site of the South Bank Arts Centre before 1951. My only criticism is that in the midst of the dreadful post-war architecture on the site, the quality of the facades of the new housing and the riverbank railings should have been higher.

Finally, I reserve my real venom for the leaders of the Labour Party, and the left in general. With the notable exception of the former GLC, which did so much to finance Coin Street's purchase of the site, the left has done next to nothing to encourage community action over the past 15 years. These people fail utterly to perceive that architecture, the environment and our natural and built heritage together constitute the greatest moral and political issue of our day. It is an issue, moreover, in which the traditional instrument of the left, collective action, or community action as at Coin Street or Weller Street, is essential if anything is to be achieved against the greed of property developers and their architects or the obstructiveness of local authorities and governments. It is an issue which vividly focusses upon poverty and power. But so long as the political hacks who run the Labour Party remain blind to this, so long as they believe that there are 'no votes in it', so long will their party remain in the wilderness.

But it is not they alone who are at fault. Recent critiques of the heritage industry by Patrick Wright and Robert Hewison betray a benumbing intellectual ambivalence about our heritage. In their search for what I dub 'the proper left analysis' of things like the campaign to save the telephone kiosk, they conduct a painstaking cultural analysis of all the paradoxes of our current fascination with the past — nostalgia, as they call it — but offer no alternative vision to inspire people from every class and background who want both progress and conservation. The unholy combination of the indifference of its political leaders and the lofty detachment of its intellectuals inhibits the left from committing itself wholeheartedly to the greatest political crusade of the coming century. □

CINEMA

Pictures of pictures

Judith Williamson

The Last of England (18)
Cannon Prince Charles
The Belly of an Architect (15)
Gate Notting Hill, Screen on the Hill, Metro

I HAVE SOMETIMES complained in this column about the lack of formal experiment in recent British films. Here are two features from directors with backgrounds in the avant garde, both of whom have retained that investment in the image characteristic of their experimental short works. Both are now marketable as art film directors: these two features are both funded by C4 and British Screen in co-production with another European company (in Jarman's case, German, in Greenaway's, Italian) and clearly hold some prestige value for their British producers. But, in stretching certain avant-garde or 'art' concerns to feature length, it becomes apparent that these are not, on their own, enough.

Derek Jarman's **The Last of England** is a layering of images whose frequently impenetrable quality makes you constantly aware that they *are* images. Grainy, murky, often seeming like 'found footage', different thematic strands are overlaid: Jarman writing what appears to be a diary in his room (which makes up the voice-over), ruined streets in a newsreely present, home movies from the '20s and '50s and a fantastic, apocalyptic future where masked soldiers round up people on the streets.

This excavation of images from future, past and present is exciting for about 20 or 30 minutes; for, as in scratch video, the way the images are piled up, slowed down, repeated, makes something else out of them, just as a poem can make something else out of words. The exhilaration of seeing film used as a surface in this flickering way recalls Brakhage (even though Jarman is much more obviously in the line of Kenneth Anger, with his drugginess, his soldiers screwing on a Union Jack, etc). One of the richest visual moments is when the swirling image of a woman trying to tear out of an interminable wedding dress actually seems to thicken into solidity — as if the film itself was being stirred like setting toffee.

The very act of taking techniques like these beyond the bounds of the short is important in itself. But the weakness of the film is in what the imagery's *of*. Jarman seems to have had this apocalyptic vision for so long — *In the Shadow of the Sun, Jubilee* — that it suffers from overkill and loses its political meaning: the derelict young men shooting up in empty buildings and ragged post-punks dancing round fires are becoming familiar trademarks. And shoving 'Land of Hope and Glory' on the soundtrack doesn't really work as a political gesture: despite an oblique parody of the Royal Wedding, the film offers no insights into the end-of-empire destruction it depicts.

But the real problem is that we've already moved into our own *fin-de-siècle* period where images of urban decadence and decay are so modish that they refer to each other as much as to any social actuality. Half of the imagery in *Last of England* is like a Heroin Screws You Up ad; the aggressive-little-boy-lost looks glower out from every album cover. There is a stylishness about all this dereliction which makes it meaningless politically. This isn't entirely Jarman's fault; he is, in fact, able to suggest an atmosphere entirely through non-transparent images culled from this *Face*-like repertoire; they *connote*, rather than denote anything specific. A shopping trolley in water isn't so much a realist image of our streets as an image of the emptiness of a culture. But the film partakes of this emptiness itself; it riffles through the visual thesaurus of our time but adds no new meanings or inflections. In particular, the home-movie imagery is part of a new shorthand for a '50s-esque, suburban normality, now superceded by our own superior knowingness: we can already see beyond those happy, shy smiles which, for a whole generation, merely confirm our cynicism. The fact that those '50s faces now grace not only Biff cartoons but British Rail ads detracts from the impact of this juxtaposition in Jarman's film. Yes, the cute little boy in shorts is now a guy in a leather jacket, but so what?

Those two horrible words, or rather, their twins, Big Deal, were frequently in my mind during this film. 'Naked guy eats raw cauliflower by burning bin — big deal.' 'Guy wanks on Caravaggio picture — big deal.' A response, perhaps, to the film's own lack of humour; lines like 'tomorrow has been cancelled owing to lack of interest' or 'the *A-Z* clamped a grid on despair' are so desperately redolent of adolescence, it felt as if the diary was being written by a sort of camp Adrian Mole. It is a pity that, in carrying visual experiment into a major production, this film is without a wider context of similar work which might help knock the edges off its clichés.

Peter Greenaway's latest, **The Belly of an Architect**, is, though very different, also highly invested in its visual surface. Sacha Vierny's photography, capturing both the liquidity of Rome's light and the solidity of its buildings, gives the film an aesthetic quality that it would be churlish to deny.

Like Greenaway's other films, it is clever but cold. However, unlike Greenaway's other films, it has someone who can act. Brian Dennehy as Kracklite — the middle-aged American architect with stomach cancer whose great project is taken from him by the same man who seduces his wife — gives a deeply moving performance, quite against the grain of the film's own heartlessness. Where Greenaway seems to use this massive, dying man merely as part of an intellectual formula, Dennehy turns him into a living, raging being. The sense that he is struggling, not only against his illness but against the coolness of the film itself, heightens the poignancy of Kracklite's position; in particular the emphasis on the male body, one of the film's neat architectural analogies, becomes peculiarly moving, the folds of stone flesh on the great statues forming a counterpoint to Kracklite's own pasty bulk. But when Dennehy almost pushes the film into being about the fragility of the male body and ego, the formulaic plot pulls us back into the realm of ideas, and this uncharacteristic injection of humanity only makes it clearer that the rest of the characters are merely counters on the Greenaway board. □

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Books

SEXUAL POLITICS

Intimations of morality

Jeffrey Weeks

Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830
FRANK MORT *Routledge* £7.95

IN THE AUTUMN of 1913 a minor incident occurred in the Derbyshire coalfield town of Dronfield which echoes down the years, putting our local concerns about sex and morality into historical perspective.

The headmistress of the local elementary school, a Miss Outram, was asked by the girls in her sixth form some delicate questions about pregnancy and childbirth. Rather than suggest that they ask their parents, which had been her first inclination, she eventually responded by reading them two stories. The first was a heavily scripturalised version of how God made the first baby, the second a moral tale about the importance of young men treating young women properly, lest you kill 'your immortal soul'.

By contemporary standards, even the most conservative, the stories are proper in the extreme. But in 1913 Dronfield all hell broke loose around the head of Miss Outram. For the headmistress was an avowed feminist, with advanced views about the importance of sexual hygiene. She was a middle-class woman challenging the rights of working-class parents. She was an independent woman confronting the misogyny of the school managers. Before the local moral panic blew itself out in the face of the greater crisis (even in Dronfield) of the outbreak of war, all the forces of righteousness, on all sides, had been mobilised, the local education authority implicated and the subtle procrastinations of the national state, in the form of the board of education and the inspectorate, tested to the full.

The point of the story is not to suggest that nothing changes, that all the battles of the present have been fought before. What is more interesting is how things do, in fact, change. The *dramatis personae* are remarkably similar to those in our modern socio-sexual dramas: the militant sex reformer, parents claiming their rights, school governors in conflict with the local authority, the state knowing it has the power to intervene but not quite sure how to use it. But the admixture is distinct. Here, for instance, it was the feminist Miss Outram who displayed that intoxicating blend of moral purity and religious fervour more familiar today from the likes of Mrs Whitehouse. And it was the board of education that, in the end, sought to calm the storm rather than fan the flames in the fashion of our current political leadership.

The real lesson of this cautionary tale, which illustrates a key point of transition for Frank Mort, is that no single narrative of sexual history can explain why a minor incident can become a national *cause célèbre*. Neither a Whiggish narrative of progressive enlightenment from the darkness of Victorian repression, nor a New Right narrative of decline from the glories of Victorian Values does justice to the complexity of the interacting forces and interests — class and gender, local and national — that shape the terrain of sexuality. Indeed, what we define as moral and immoral, good or bad, healthy or diseased, as *sexual*, is constituted through these local networks of power.

In his long anticipated book, Mort illustrates this theme by unravelling the structures of language and meaning which link our beliefs about health and disease to notions of moral and immoral sex. The book starts and ends with the living history in which we are caught and, in particular, the crisis over Aids. But the solidly researched heart of the book explores the development of the various moral languages of which we are the unsuspecting heirs and which constitute the modern sexual babble.

What is striking from this history is how constant the repertoire of sexual scripts is. The early speculations about the origins of Aids — concentrating on the lifestyle of its earliest victims in the West, gay men — could draw on a rich environmentalist language, refined in the 1840s and 1850s, which sought to explain typhoid by

Mary Evans Picture Library.

Victorian pursuing a radically pluralist response to his current sexual crisis

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rooting it in the immoral conditions of working-class life. Should people with Aids be segregated and confined? Well, there were more or less respectable precedents for this in the enthusiasm of the experts of the 1860s and '70s to confine prostitutes under the Contagious Disease Acts, to inhibit the spread of syphilis.

Echoes abound in the history of sexuality. Are our preoccupations today with child sex abuse really different from those dramatised in the 1880s by the journalist W. T. Stead in his famous exposure of child prostitution, 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon'? How different, indeed, is the ingenuity of the modern tabloid press to combine sleaze, prurience and crusading vigour from the style pioneered by Stead? The context has changed, the balance of social forces is different, the accumulation of moral languages (environmental, biological, religious, criminological, sociological, psychoanalytic, feminist) has grown ever more exotic. But the possibilities of thinking of sexuality in new ways becomes at the same time ever more difficult because of the weight of this living history.

Two central points of Mort's argument need special emphasis. The first concerns the central role of the expert in this complex history. From the moral environmentalism of the 1840s, through the sexologists of the 1890s and the eugenicists of the 1910s, the expert — the male expert — has had a central role in defining what is appropriate, necessary, decent and healthy in moral behaviour. Mort usefully dissects the dubious origins of their power and influence. The second important emphasis is on the significance of gender in this history. The history of sexuality is, in Mort's phrase, a 'gendered' history. Some of the best parts of the book are those which explore this theme in concrete analyses. The case of Miss Outram is one example where issues of class and gender are so inextricably linked that it becomes a dazzling beam of light into a murky history. Perhaps even more interesting is Mort's analysis of social-purity feminism at the turn of the century, which, he argues, opened a space for women to articulate a necessary sense of identity against men, at the same time as it encouraged a new zeal for criminalising 'immoral' behaviour.

Given this stress, and the overall emphasis of the book as a genealogy of our present 'gendered' discontents, it is disappointing that Mort's own response to the present and future is left rather vague. He appeals in the closing pages of the book for a sharper understanding of the nature of modern masculinity and for a 'new settlement' between the sexes. But there is no indication of how these desirable ends are to be achieved. He is dismissive of recent attempts — including my own — to define a radically pluralist response to our current sexual crisis, because they are 'ungendered'. If this is indeed the case (though I would dispute it) then surely that should be the spur to the development of a more satisfactory approach.

The weakness of the book lies in what is perhaps an over-enthusiastic devotion to Foucault's dictum that the task of the modern intellectual is to analyse, not prescribe. Its strength lies in the analysis. The past is not a foreign country. As Mort shows, in the sphere of sexuality we are still living it. □

FICTION

Slow, slow, quick . . .

Oliver Harris

More Die of Heartbreak
SAUL BELLOW *Secker* £10.95

READING SAUL BELLOW's new novel, the first for five years and only his second since collecting the Nobel Prize in 1976, brought to mind Martin Amis' vision of the white-haired septuagenarian as an 'omniscient tortoise'. It is unlikely that Amis had Zeno's Second Paradox in mind, but the riddle of Achilles and the tortoise suitably fits Bellow's puzzling career. He has never run noticeably fast, but, defying the logic of literary motion, stubbornly refuses to be overtaken.

Back in the 1960s, Bellow looked like being eclipsed, squeezed out by the extremes of the new wave of American talent. While avoiding the arch conservatism of Bernard Malamud or Isaac Bashevis Singer, he declined, unlike Norman Mailer, to update his outsider identity as a Jew by going underground with the hipsters. Refusing to cast off the chains of realism, Bellow held, indeed held together, the traditional middle ground, the old humanistic centre, at a time when others took it for granted that the centre simply couldn't hold. On the one hand, he appeared too pompous to follow Barth or Pynchon into the metafictional funhouse and too timid to bathe in the dawn fires of the Apocalypse much heralded by William Burroughs. On the other, he wasn't realistic enough: Tom Wolfe, anthologising the hyped New Journalism, saw the novelists 'sweating it out, wondering where they stand. Damn it all, Saul, the *Huns* have arrived . . .' But Saul has survived, bided his time through the fashion shows of stylistic anxiety and the Big Bangs of eschatalogical prophecy. 'Civilisation is still here,' he pointed out in the 1960s with evident satisfaction; and so, into the 1980s, is Bellow.

There is, in a characteristically Bellowian sense, nothing new in his new novel. It's an old story: Jewish American Intellectual Discovers Chaos in Chicago, etc. And yet there is no feeling of staleness, of a Great Writer scratching around in the same over-worn groove. On the contrary, against all the odds and contrary to the relatively sombre discipline of *The Dean's December* (1982), which Amis announced was to be his Late Style, *More Die of Heartbreak* is Bellow at his very best, surprisingly energetic, typically voluble, always intelligent, often angry, but above all comic.

Benn Crader — alias Professor Chlorophyll the innocent plant mystic — a widow-bachelor for 15 years, decides to marry. His nephew Kenneth Trachtenberg returns from Europe to 'preserve him in his valuable oddity'. A lecturer on The Meaning of Love and Russian Sexual Mystics, Kenneth knows that a telepathic oneness with lichens is no advantage where women are concerned. As the plot unravels, Benn the botanist becomes 'knee-deep in the garbage of a personal life', unable to resist the mafiosa machinations of his family or to control the 'demon of sexuality'. Marrying Matilda Layamon, a 'classy, extraordinarily desirable woman' straight off the cover of *Vogue*, the Citizen of Eternity swaps his vegetable kingdom for the beauty of gloss and the values of gangsters. Here Benno is exposed as an absentminded murderer and a 'full-scale example of the ordeal by desire', so forfeiting his transcendental freedom from 'low-grade human meanness'. Benn the schnook enters what in *The Dean's December* Corde dubbed 'the moronic inferno' of contemporary life, before abandoning civilisation altogether for the icy darkness of the North Pole.

Such is the plot and, as usual in Bellow, it is neither so simple nor so important. The narrating nephew stops to remind himself, and the reader, that his true task is 'to relate the strange turns in the life of my uncle Ben'. But this is the alibi; the real action of the book is rhetorical, the strangest turns belonging to omnipresent, unreliable Kenneth. This self-confessed 'sly-frank' narrator ranks with the most brilliant of Bellow's talking-heads, almost Nabakovian in his mixture of self-awareness and self-deceit. A compulsive lecturer, like many of his fictional predecessors Kenneth succumbs to his 'weakness for the big issues', for what Herzog called 'five-cent syntheses'. As befits a self-proclaimed erratic talker he is a poor listener, another man with his foot deep in his mouth. 'My theorizing was an irritant, so I had better not theorize at him,' he decides, trying to remember whether it was Hegel or Schopenhauer who . . . 'For the love of God, Kenneth. Not *now*,' bemoans Benn. Whatever terrible manifestations of modernity he sees in others, Kenneth possesses himself, in spades. Behind his romantic goal of moral redemption, Project Turning Point, twists an intellectual misogyny. 'Don't you like belonging to this species?' asks the mother of his daughter, for whom, he realises, he is a 'sexual wraith'.

If love is the crisis of *More Die of Heartbreak*, cerebral sermonising is its curse. 'The terrible result of hyperactive but unfocused consciousness is a cause of our decline,' Kenneth intones, before resuming his impatient and apocalyptic 'mental fussing'. 'More die of heartbreak than of radiation,' explains Uncle Benn, before fleeing both sex and science for the Arctic. If The End is coming after all, it may arrive not on the charging 'ashen horse' of 'abyssifying and catastrophying' prophets like Dean Corde or Kenneth Trachtenberg, but on the back of a tortoise like Saul Bellow. □

FICTION

All in the mind

Michelene Wandor

The Lizard's Tail
LUISA VALENZUELA trans. GREGORY RABASSA
Serpent's Tail £7.95

I AM SURE I can be forgiven for not realising that this novel is 'a fictional biography of Lopez Rega, Isabel Peron's minister of social well-being, who ruled Argentina through sorcery and witchcraft'.

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The blurb imformed me of this, but I can't help wondering to what extent the 'real-life' source of this piece of magic realism is important. It is interesting, of course, for a marginal element of insight into the writer's imaginative processing, but I am not sure that, in the end, it adds to the quality of appreciation called forth by this most extraordinary novel.

The central, first-person narrator has the amoral tone of the confidently deranged. He (though I am not entirely certain that it is a 'he') is a Sorcerer, a being whose body harbours a sister, Estrella, who is located somewhere about the solar plexus/genital region, who acts as conscience and whom s/he also desires to join with in marriage in order to give birth to her/himself. You see what I mean about magic realism. The Sorcerer lives in a strange, primitive country, persecuted by abstract, bureaucratic voices from the capital, while pursuing an expansionist and colonising plan in swamps and jungles. This involves building an enormous pyramid, based on the principle of labour as a form of involuntary human sacrifice; it involves establishing a harem of Indian maidens and it involves the collusion of a wimpish, wolfish aide, a mutant with six fingers (called, of course, Sixfingers) and an iconic Dead Woman (Isabel Peron herself?).

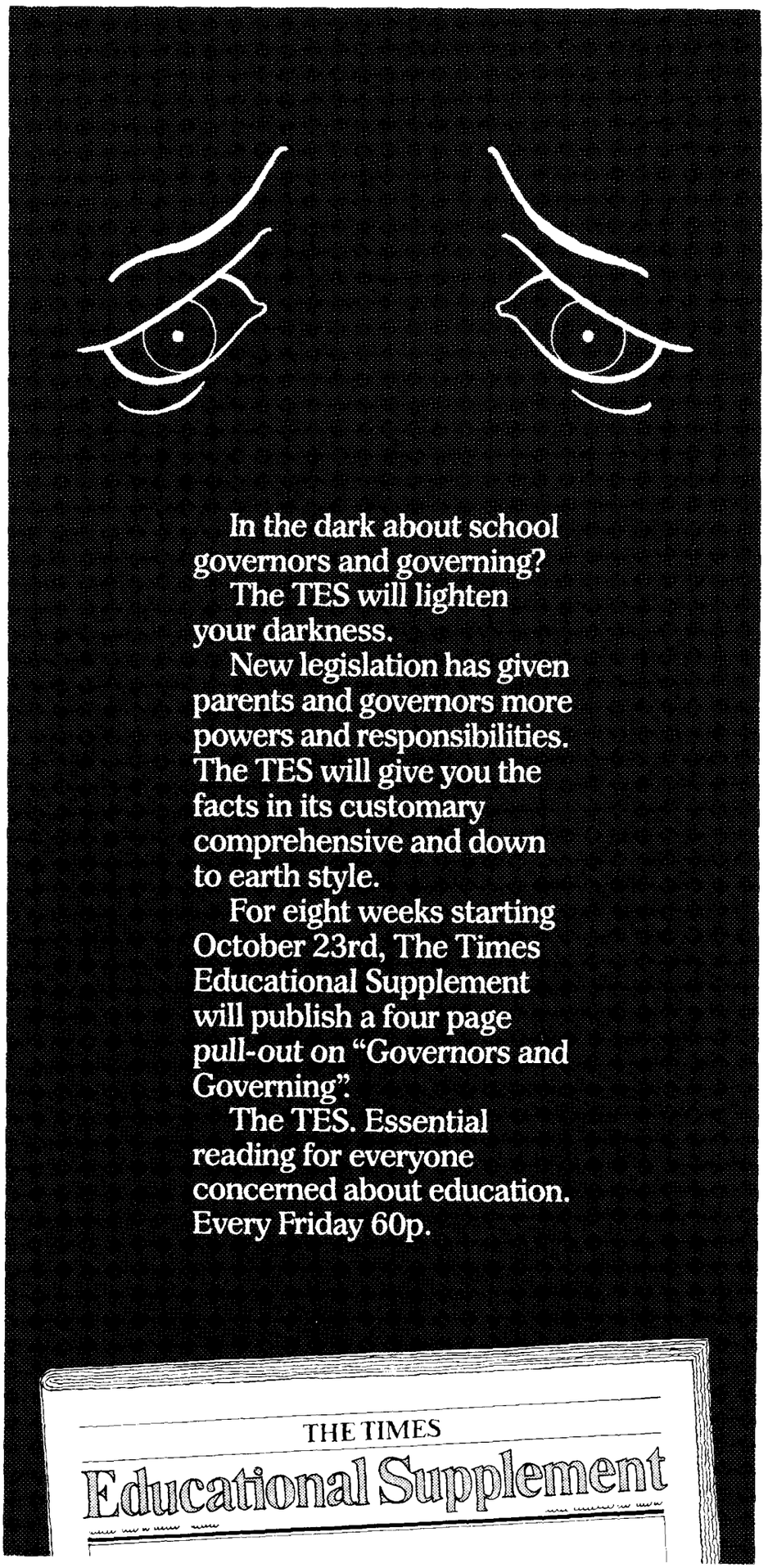
Our Scorcerer is, appropriately, a megalomaniac; 'my mother gave a double shriek when I was born and then died forever; there was nothing left for her to do.' The Sorcerer is entirely ego, a chameleon in the power game, emotionally invulnerable, the power behind the throne, absolutely impervious even to the idea that questions of morality exist.

The prose is dense, poetic, descriptive. As counter-balast to this disturbing hot-line to an unconscious which obeys the linguistic rules of grammar but not the social rules of civilisation, the novel's author herself appears, under her real name, to tell us that her character has, in part, colonised her imagination. Now this is a seductive but perhaps slightly twee device; it almost works, except that having introduced an element of dangerous play Valenzuela leaves it at the level of assertion rather than demonstration. Although she fears this voice of amoral violence (which is hers, after all, since it comes from her imagination) and although she tries to stifle it by telling us that she has stopped writing, the Sorcerer speaks on and has the final word in the book.

The writer is safe — perhaps because she has had (in reality) to protect herself from the risks of being taken over by such an anti-social voice — but it has to be said that the novel is a little the poorer for it. Not that I want fiction writers to be so absorbed in their voices that they can no longer tell the difference between fiction and reality — that way one kind of madness lies — but, compulsive and fascinating as the Sorcerer undoubtedly is, it is the Sorcerer's habitat in the author's mind that is the real subject of the novel, not the nature of Argentinian repression. And that is where I came in. □

NEW STATESMAN INDEX

The index to Vol. 113 (Jan.—June 1987) is now available, price £2.50 (incl. p&p). Send remittance with order to **New Statesman (Index), Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ.**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FICTION

Private letters

Grace Ingoldby

Arky Types
SARA MAITLAND and MICHELENE WANDOR
Methuen £3.95

Dear Reader,

I'm writing to you in the vein of Mrs Vicar, the 'silly billy' of *Arky Types* who dashes off her letters between dithering and darning Mr Vicar's socks. I choose her because she will *underline* everything — and her voice underlines my own confusion with the book. Wandor and Maitland don't consider their audience much (they keep them, like hyacinths, in the dark) but it occurs to me that if no one understands this review, it will at least given them the *feel* of *Arky Types*. It is a collection of letters, the bulk of which centre, if they don't close in, on the problem of the authors having been commissioned to write a joint book, and not knowing what to write. This is quite a toughie (burning urgency is *such* a help) and must account for all the chat, the *angst* about reclaiming myths, about not wanting to write a 'clever, clever modernist book about the process of writing a book' or 'something with proper 19c. rounded characters' or something 'where everything else is dependent on narrative events'. If this sounds technical or tedious (I kept thinking about aeroplanes: quit the tour of the control panel, take me somewhere please!), I should say straight away that the authors are sick of reviewers (well aren't we all?) and *Arky Types* does at least give them the chance to discuss their own works, at length. Actually, it provides them with the opportunity to review each other — all right, I suppose, when it's taken as read (!) that readers are cognisant with the texts so neatly asterisked: *Virgin Territory, Guests in the Body, Gardens of Eden* . . . To join in the book of revelations, I myself am a 'ploddy social realist' (when my characters want a cuppa they go to Ceylon first to pick the leaves) which may help you understand why I found *Arky Types so* suspicious, why I couldn't stop sniffing around for clues and motives, why I found myself asking *ridiculous* questions: What is this book about? Why was it written at all? Between you and me I was worried that I might embarrass myself and the *New Statesman* by not getting the gist of *Arky Types*, by exposing that what I considered simply fatuous was actually 'intelligent womens' fiction' that had gone right over my head. The cutie blurb by the fiction editor, 'Who wrote which letters . . .?', didn't concern me but I did wonder, well, very early on, whether Maitland and Wandor really wrote these letters, was it the touch of the Tarbie brush perhaps or a script by Victoria Wood? Was the joke on Methuen Modern Fiction, a cruel twist you say, but then it is remarkable what one can get away with in the name of current trends. On the subject of publishers I must say that in a narrative about as gripping as a bar of soap one or two things raised the shadow of a smile. Nicky and Sam, publisher and agent, are very Perrier/claret, very Groucho's. Their letters were mildly diverting for me, a writer, and I suppose the authors were attempting to disillusion readers of the myth that books, like mountains, are just there. But *Arky Types* isn't marked 'Trade Only' and I do think it's marginally more exhilarating to climb a mountain than to discover its origins, don't you? It would moreover be misleading to say that there are letters for all tastes here. However various nuns, unicorns and lesbian tortoises may be, I'm afraid they're all strictly for the coterie. It must be obvious by now that I never chalked round the corpse in the breakfast room, that my exhaustive, if mistaken, search for meaning came to nothing in the end. Still, no experience is ever wasted and the exercise did prove thought-provoking in its way. Why is it I wonder that some feminist writing is so narcissistic, so complacent, so exclusive? What a pity really when the likes of Mrs Vicar dither and might still be wooed and won. □

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HEALTH

Sick joke

Amanda Hopkinson

A Question of Care
NICK DAVIDSON *Michael Joseph* £6.95
Whose Health Is It Anyway?
JUDITH COOK *NEL* £6.95

IF YOU LISTEN to Tory propaganda — hard to avoid when you-know-who control the media — you will have been repeatedly informed that the number of medical staff and facilities are up, while waiting-lists and bureaucratic muddles are down. Listen more carefully and tune into vocabulary never before associated with health-care: terms like 'reduced wastage', 'bed savings', 'economic rationalisation', all in the name of the new god 'efficiency'. The vocabulary discloses the hallmark of accountancy now stamped on the NHS, founded as a service 'free at the point of need', but in which prescription charges alone have rocketed a pernicious 325 per cent since 1979 and where, when it comes to renting out wards to private patients, or flogging off nurses' homes, 'profit' is no longer a dirty word.

It was the unwieldy structure of local health services, and the considerable autonomy that this permitted doctors, that gave the present government a consensus in pushing through two massive reorganisations. Under the guise of doing away with the unpopular old, it ushered in the unacceptable new. Both Nick Davidson and Judith Cook take Thatcher's pledge that 'the NHS is safe in our hands' as a starting-point from which to document the changes.

A Question of Care focuses on Davidson's local borough of Haringey and analyses the impact of 'the new managerialism' generated by the infamous Griffiths report in 1983, remodelling the NHS along the lines of Sainsburys supermarkets. While much rhetoric was devoted to promoting 'consumer satisfaction', through the introduction of practices intended to 'sharpen up the management process' or construct a more 'purposeful and coherent style', the reality served the 'customers' somewhat differently. The number of hospitals was halved; figures were juggled to imply that a slight overall staff increase meant more nursing care; dramatic reversal of previous devolutionary procedures took place, in order to centralise overall control.

Peter was robbed to pay Paul in that the regions were allowed to benefit only to the extent that London suffered, and individual boroughs could obtain revenue increases only by selling off their capital assets. Thus 'community care' could be paid for only by the sale of a mental institution, from which the residents were then decanted into 'the community'.

Davidson offers some harrowing accounts of the former inmates of large-scale institutions, even venturing a correlation between the closure of 30 mental hospitals and the construction of 14 new prisons. He notes that, from its inception in 1947, the NHS has emphasised 'curing rather than caring' and wisely doesn't seek to defend old-style mental asylums. He also sensibly leaves that bastion of the medical establishment, the *British Medical Journal*, to have an official last word on the subject: 'It is truly remarkable that we do not know what proportion (of former patients) have settled successfully in the community with family or other support groups, have struggled on in a lonely abyss, have lived a life of destitution or have given up . . .'

Whose Health Is It Anyway? is also concerned at the manner in which the government establishes health service priorities — the mentally ill, handicapped and the elderly — and then smartly shunts them off into the 'community care' sector. With Cook's grass roots firmly in the Community Health Councils, she is well aware of how easily 'community' becomes another euphemism for the exploitation of women as unpaid carers. Her interviews show a service hardly worthy of the name, and one already at breaking point.

Some of her chapters parallel those in Davidson's book. 'Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics' demonstrates how 58,000 'extra' nurses can be conjured out of a shortening in the working week and a growth in part-timers, or how the vaunted reduction in waiting-lists is achieved by removing day admissions, readmissions or altered appointments from the numbering system. Alongside Davidson's history of the 'inverse care law' (those who need most receive least) Judith Cook presents the preconditions of how to 'be poor and die young': deprivation, ignorance and an unhealthy environment. As polarisation between haves and have-nots continues, so the poor suffer both from their need for treatment, and from the treatment meted out to them. Both

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authors also view the spread of Aids in the light of inadequate preventative and educative steps already taken, and the future implications in terms of a real cut in other health-care options.

While, together, these books make essential campaigning material on one of the hottest of political hot potatoes, each sets the tone very differently. Where Davidson's is cautious and academic, Cook's is vigorous and polemical. He discusses the *feel* of the health 'service' while retaining his cool; her temperature escalates as she relentlessly pursues her subject. At times she loses patience with the patients themselves, asking, 'Why they don't complain more, I just don't know.'

Well, I think I do. Were I one of her elderly gentlemen 'waiting prostate operations who have catheters put in' I might well feel too undignified to draw attention to my distress. Or worried that some harassed nurse or overworked doctor could take a possible sadistic pleasure in putting me down as a troublemaker and prolonging my agony. But I leave the last word and a fine example of her forthright style to Judith Cook:

> Occasionally they complain to their Member of Parliament and then he or she will make a fuss and they might get pushed up the waiting lists which are a scandal and the present Government policy of shoving £x-million into the melting pot to reduce waiting lists is absolute codswallop. □

CREATIVITY

The sex of art

Michèle Roberts

Glancing Fires: An Investigation into Women's Creativity
ed. LESLEY SAUNDERS *Women's Press* £5.95

THE SUBTITLE of this book is a bit of a misnomer: for 'women's creativity' read 'feminist creativity'. The editor admits that hers is not a representative or inclusive selection; she has commissioned essays by women whose work she knows, respects and likes, with a modest view to illuminating 'various corners of current activity'. All the contributors, with a couple of exceptions, would probably call themselves some sort of feminist; all start from the premise that women's creativity is different from men's.

The book assumes a particular sort of feminist context and, perhaps, a particular feminist readership too. It takes it for granted that women have a specific history and social/sexual experience, which shapes both their attitudes to making art and the art itself.

This is not necessarily a limitation, since we've hardly heard everything that feminists, let alone women in general, have to say on the matter, but, by the end of the book, I did begin perversely to wish for just one dissenting voice (male or female) to splutter angrily that *of course* the artist's mind is androgynous (in fact Monica Sjoo does hint at this in her essay).

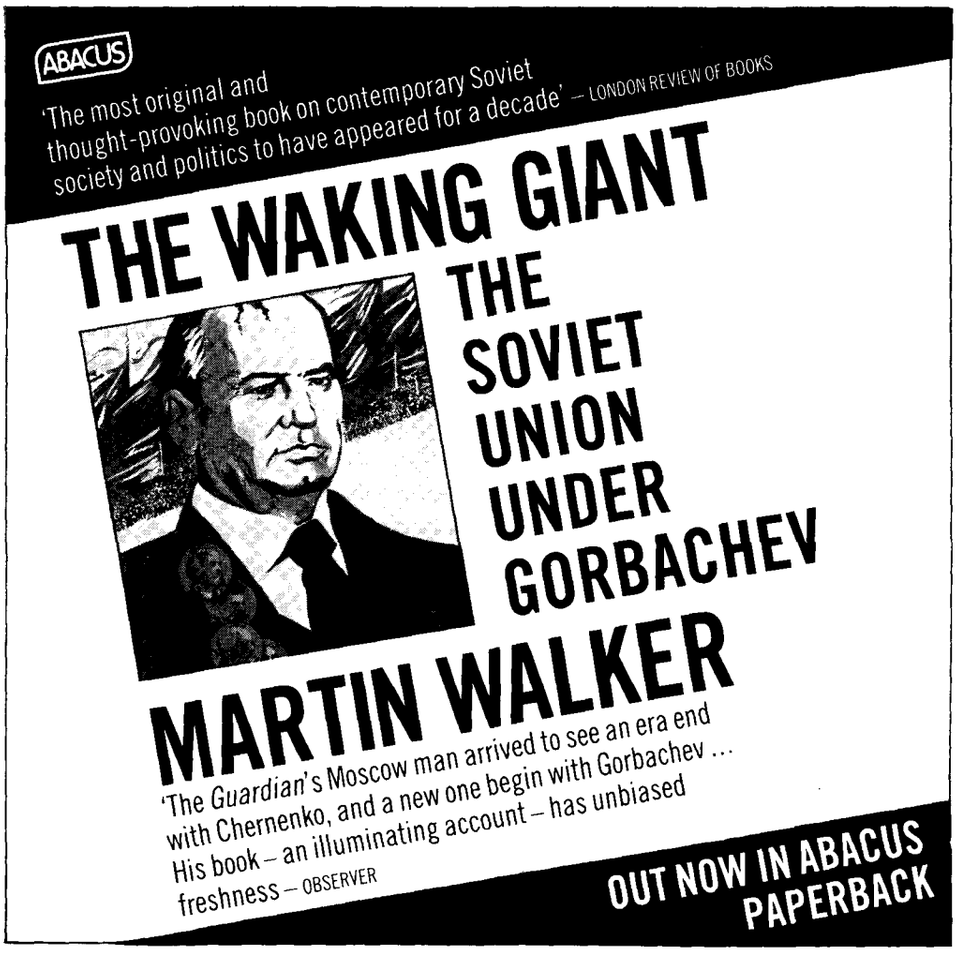
Lesley Saunders' brief introduction makes the case for feminism to be regarded simply as 'a starting point, not a termination. Feminism is about politics, its impetus is to change the existing balance of power. Having said that, the ensuing questions about how it is changed, by whom and for what end, and whether it is safe to assume that all women make common cause, with a common agenda, are in the course of the book implied, tested, dismissed, reflected on'.

The structure of the book does make direct connections between women's bodies, women's art and ecology. We move through sections entitled 'Mapping internal landscapes: femaleness'; 'Making space in the world: politics'; 'Hollering from the earth: form'.

The opening pieces in the first section consider whether or not motherhood is liberating to the woman artist, given how time-consuming and exhausting it can be and that, while often signed as the *only* creative act for a woman, it carries a low social status. I couldn't respond to the tone and language of Liz Hood's and Ruth Noble's pieces, but I understood what they were saying about rage and rebirth. Diana Scott goes on to give a witty and intelligent account of writer's block. Alix Pirani, describing how and why she wrote the Song of Songs for 1984, is good on women's self-hate and sexual self-doubt. Helen McNeil sensitively describes the excitement of moving from scholarly writing (her lovely recent book on Emily Dickinson) into other sorts, and illuminates without self-pity the whole question of just who is allowed to be called an artist. Monica Sjoo, well known for her stark, visionary paintings, contributes a passionate and moving account of her son's death and its effect on her work and beliefs.

The second section considers the impact of the woman artist on the world. Joan Blaney describes trying to get white youth workers to accept African Dance as a valid activity for girls. Ange Grunsell claims space for her writing at home. Catherine Itzin sings the praises of Re-Evaluation Counselling as a method whereby individuals can discharge internalised oppression (she swears that it's possible to write without fags — I've got to try this). Amrita Mohin discusses teaching and racism, mothering and Indian culture. Anna Wilson is quietly depressed about the possibility of writing another lesbian novel, given the times we live in. Maud Sulter connects being poor, black and female, and hearteningly stresses that desire is the key to making art for survival. In the third section, various practitioners discuss form — most notably, for me, Frankie Armstrong and Sandi Russell on singing.

The person most hard done by in the collection is the editor herself. The design of the book (on which she presumably agreed) means that she nowhere gets the space to assemble her thoughtful and intelligent comments into just one or two coherent pieces; instead they are scattered about as linking passages between the other women's essays, with the result that they become rather anxious instructions on what not to miss, on how to read, on what to understand. They are also unfortunately printed in a hard-to-read italic, without chapter headings. This is a great shame, since what she is saying is often stimulating and provocative. □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CENTRAL AMERICA *Cont'd from p.19*

Nor are the businessmen doing badly. The British multinational BAT still has a monopoly of cigarettes, producing them in its Tabacalera Nicaraguense factory down by Lake Managua. ICI is busily promoting its insecticides. The Texaco signs are still up. With goods in short supply and banknotes in surplus one does not have to be a business genius to make a fortune in Managua today.

'General Sandino fought more than he thought,' one foreign adviser observed acutely of the 1920s patriot who opposed the US Marine occupation of Nicaragua and after whom the Sandinistas named themselves. Sandinismo is made up principally of a nationalism which simply wants an end to decades of foreign interference in Nicaragua. As such it is accepted by the vast majority of Nicaraguans. Combined with the nationalism is a degree of regard for Marx and a little for Lenin. This ideological respect is overshadowed by the very human sentiment of gratefulness towards countries like Cuba and the USSR which provided concrete and indispensible aid against aggression when the Europeans and others sat on their hands.

But just as the Labour Party owes — or owed — more to Methodism than Marxism so Sandinismo is more indebted to Loyola than Lenin. No intellectual force has greater influence than the Jesuits over Nicaragua today. They run the best university and the best schools in the country and play their part in government.

There is still no capital punishment in Nicaragua. The quality of life in Mangua, even in these days when the revolution is fighting for its survival, is very far removed from the oppressive macho personalism and militarism of Fidel Castro's Cuba, with its ceaseless harrying of homosexuals. There are no tutelary pictures of either of the Ortegas in Managua, much less of the seven *commandantes* together.

According to the economists, there is too *little* authoritarianism in economic life rather than too much. In one brutal analysis of Sandinismo a foreign adviser started by remarking that few governments had ever taken power so unprepared to rule as the *commandantes.*

'The seven have always wanted to take decisions by consensus. That's all right with military and political decisions. The trouble is that none of them knows much about economics, so there's never much of a consensus. There's no firm central authority for economic affairs. Somoza had a chap at the Central Bank who more or less singlehandedly kept the currency stable. When the Sandinistas came in the Central Bank was seen as a nest of reactionaries and was ignored. What this place needs is one man charged with getting the economy right.'

As the defence against the Cuba terror bleeds money from the Sandinistas that they should be spending on their people, Nicaraguans are getting very tired and war-weary. One would argue that Nicaragua continues not because of an allegiance to Sandinismo but just because of a bloody-minded resolve by Nicaraguans that their country is not going to be rubbished by a gang of terrorists paid by some arrogant foreign *camarilla.*

Wherever the will to resist comes from the effect is the same in the end. 'Aqui no se rinde nadie' say the government hoardings. 'No one is surrendering here.' □

LETTERS

In defence of NLR

Chris Bertram, London N16

David Selbourne's throwaway attack on the *New Left Review* (*NS* 16 Oct.) cannot go unanswered; especially since it is made under the cover of *glasnost*. While berating the *Review* for 'intellectual falsehood', Selbourne wilfully gives the impression (on the basis of *one* quotation) that the purpose of the Anderson-Nairn essays of the 1960s was to emphasise the strength of the British labour movement. In fact, as Selbourne must be aware, the essays sought to contrast the numerical and organisational strength of that movement with political weakness. Anderson and Nairn may have been 'often wrong and at times absurd' (as Auden said of Freud), but they rightly took a more jaundiced view of future prospects of Labourism than many others (including perhaps Selbourne?) did in 1964.

The suggestion that the *Review* was at fault for promoting the serious study of Marx and of 'Western Marxism' also has a nasty smell to it. Selbourne has every right to reject Marxism, but presumably he has done so on the basis of the kind of engagement with the Marxist tradition that he now deplores.

Selbourne now sings the praises of both *glasnost* and the market. *Glasnost* must imply a spirit of toleration that is lacking from his article; the *New Left Review* no doubt owes much of its success to an ability to persuade people to buy it.

Anarchy rules OK

Paul N. Wilson, Colne, Lancs.

David Selbourne asserts (*NS* 16 Oct.) that 'There is not, and never has been, a socialist movement which can deal with the individual.' Later, however, he contradicts himself by praising, quite rightly, 'late eighteenth and early nineteenth century labour and socialist organisations' for their 'voluntarist, libertarian, and anti-statist' qualities. He might have gone on to mention the anarchist movement, too; consistant supporters of socialist individualism for well over a century, and implacable foes of Marxist-Leninism, Trotskyism, Fabianism, and any other form of authoritarian, imposed, kiddology socialism. But then anarchists aren't all that enamoured of capitalism or the morality of the marketplace, either, so perhaps it isn't too surprising that Selbourne should so carefully avoid mentioning them.

Bandwagon politics

Michael Brewer, High Wycombe, Bucks.

It's to be hoped that in publishing Anthony Curwen (*NS* 9 Oct.) you had hopes of starting a lively debate. I am sure your hopes will be realised.

During a number of years in active politics I met several bandwagon jumpers, but their flavour-of-the-month views never appeared in the pages of the *New Statesman*.

Have I really been wrong over many years in regarding Cecil King as a person upon whose opinions one should place scant value? I imagine that Clem Attlee will have been singularly unworried at King's description of him, if it ever reached his ears. He led the country through some very difficult postwar years, emerging with no little credit. Even some Tory politicians and journalists are now willing to give him some praise. Should you print many more articles of this nature, I shall be tempted to adopt a 'come back, Auberon Waugh, all is forgiven' attitude.

E. G. Matthews, Wimborne, Dorset

Anthony Curwen's sad jaundiced tale has surely one serious mistake about Mrs Thatcher. It's not limited intellect that is our Prime Minister's main defect. As far as one can define intelligence — roughly it seems to be speed of brain scan — she is probably no worse than most ministers. It's lack of imagination and experience that is the trouble.

When will we have ministers and other rulers who have, for example, spent time in African villages, been unemployed, run a business personally or as a member of a co-operative, in fact done anything to supplement academic life and the manoeuvring of party machines or the corridors of Whitehall?

The British ruling class still contains many people insulated from the general life, but the prime minister has been insulated more than most. After all she has not even spent time in the army, which humanised many of her predecessors. The small shopkeeper side of her experience has been mentioned frequently. However, the *New Scientist* once pointed out that she was typical of the kind of scientist, unfortunately not uncommon, who adheres to a hypothesis tenaciously until only overwhelming evidence against it cannot be ignored. I hope Labour wins, despite Curwen's 'support'.

Rockets over Clacton

Peter Sampson, London N21

Last week I flew from Munich to Heathrow due to arrive at 10.25 hrs. In-flight, the passengers were told that London Airport was closed. Further, the captain informed us that 'There was *something* over Clacton, between 12,000-20,000 feet, that made flying dangerous.' Had the Loch Ness Monster escaped and flown South? The plane was diverted to Brussels for refuelling and a long wait on the tarmac, before reaching London at 13.45 hrs, a mere 3 hrs 20 mins late. It transpired that the Ministry of Defence had decided to carry out rocket-firing practice over Clacton, during the early-mid morning commercial airline peak period, throwing the whole Eastern UK sector into chaos.

Apart from delays to passengers coming to London, over a dozen had connecting flights to the USA, including one-flight-a-day destinations like Philadelphia, as well as South America and beyond. They all missed their flights, because Heathrow was NOT closed, but only to incoming flights on the Clacton flight path. It is quite unacceptable for the MoD to subject commercial airline passengers to massive disruption and inconvenience. If they must practice firing rockets, there ought to be more appropriate times to do it. Or why not publish a Rocket Firing Timetable, so that passengers flying to London could co-ordinate their travel arrangements, making sure they do not overfly Clacton?

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Enfranchise the Six Counties

B. R. Cosin, London NW3
Sarah Spencer's report on the scandalous abortion situation in Northern Ireland is well taken (*NS* 16 Oct.), but this is only a reflection of the appalling consequences for the people of that province of the iron determination with which the Labour and Conservative parties, in particular, have insisted on confining them to a political bantustan by denying them the right to join or vote for the British parties of government. Women in particular have suffered from the extra leverage given to the most reactionary forces in both sectarian camps by this racist political boycott. The current disarray among political parties in the province and the increasing interest on the part of Northern Irish trade unionists in joining the Labour Party suggests that the moment is ripe for us in the Labour Party to begin the enfranchisement of the people of the Six Counties.

J. Fogarty, London NW6
Enid Lakeman is welcome to her idiosyncratic view that Northern Ireland is a political paradise (*NS* Letters 16 Oct). But should not the Electoral Reform Society at least take into account the fact that the people of Northern Ireland are not allowed to vote for any of the parties which profess to govern them?

Abortion — a new campaign

L. Lloyd, on behalf of: National Abortion Campaign, Abortion Law Reform Association, Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign, Co-ordinating Committee for the Defence of the 1967 Act and other groups
A new campaign has been set up to fight against the private member's Bill being proposed by David Alton MP, to limit abortions to 18 weeks. We are appealing to your readers to help by agreeing to sponsor the campaign (and we are looking for organisations as well as individuals, prepared to have their names on our publicity material); by making a financial contribution; and in particular by contacting us if they have had abortions at 18 weeks or later, to take part in press conferences etc (anonymously if necessary).

Details can be obtained from FAB Campaign, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC2B 5AU.

Vestal virgins

Katie Woods, London N1
Slowly, slowly, the *New Statesman* is starting to take pop seriously — *slightly* more regular coverage, and by people who don't only think about the music but about the business from which that music comes. But I can't help thinking that Simon Reynolds could do with the occasional very large mug of very, very strong coffee. Last week (*NS* 16 Oct.), writing about his favourite women singers, he sounded dangerously delirious: 'We're going to have to rediscover and celebrate with worship the notion of the Gift — the belief that some people have been given, arbitrarily, a mysterious quality of voice, or a capacity to have visions . . .' Apart from anything else, Simon, what on earth does that *mean*? Assuming that you're not seriously telling us to go and worship a notion, do you want us to bow before the gift itself, the gifted, or — could it be — the Giver? I'd really be interested to know.

Random breath tests

Amanda Covington, London N8
Random breath tests are yet another encroachment on our civil liberties, already eroded by this present wretched government. In time, mark my words, we will be forced to return to a system of identity passes as in the last war or as recently abandoned by the Afrikaner government. These will be a computerised life history including our police and health records available for inspection by any petty bureaucrat who demands to see it. What a brave new world Mrs Thatcher will have ushered in after her next four years — and on and on.

Roger Higman, London Road Safety Alert, London EC1
The piece by Peter Thornton, celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the breathalyser was excellently written and well-balanced. (*NS* 16 Oct.) However, he raised a number of points about civil libertarian fears that were not properly addressed.

The introduction of random breath testing would not be a major encroachment of civil liberties. In New South Wales drivers are breathalysed on average once every three years. As a negative breath test takes about half a minute to complete, this represents 10 seconds of each driver's time each year.

Neither would random breath testing lead to persecution of particular groups. Because random samples of drivers passing a given point are tested (or, where manpower permits, all drivers), the opportunity for police officers to use their discretion is minimised. In Finland, for example, random breath testing leads to more older drivers being tested. This reflects the proportion of older drivers who drink, whereas discretionary breath testing is biased against younger drivers, who are thought more likely to drink by the police.

▷

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If you live in the UK and your copy of the *New Statesman* is *not* arriving on either Friday or Saturday, or if you have noticed any disruption to your normal delivery service over the last few weeks, please write to **Joanne Hurst, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ** with full details.

Subscribers living abroad are also encouraged to report any delivery problems they may be having.

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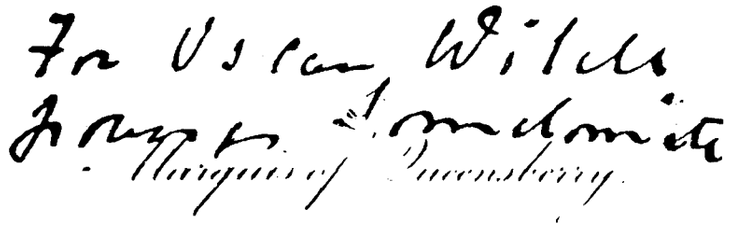

Queensberry's card

Nicolas Walter, London N1
What *exactly* did Queensberry write? (Andrew Lumsden's review of Richard Ellman's *Oscar Wilde, NS* 9 Oct.) According to Ellmann and Lumsden, it was 'To Oscar Wilde posing Somdomite'. According to Alton and Pine, it was 'For Oscar Wilde posing Somdomite'. In fact there is no doubt that the first word is not 'To', and this is one of many small errors in Ellmann's book. According to the club porter and Wilde himself, they weren't sure what the card said but thought it was 'ponce and sodomite'. According to the indictment of Queensberry, it said 'posing as Somdomite'.

According to both the prosecution and the defence during the trial, and most commentators ever since, it was 'for Oscar Wilde posing as a *somdomite*'. In fact, again, there is no doubt that there is no word 'a'. At least everyone is agreed about the misspelling of 'sodomite'.

So can this question be answered? The actual card is preserved (though restricted) in the Public Record Office, but a facsimile of it appears on the flyleaf of H. Montgomery Hyde's *Oscar Wilde* (1976). From this it is clear only that it isn't clear, though the most likely reading is indeed 'For Oscar Wilde posing Somdomite'. But let your readers see for themselves (above).

As she is spoke

Anne Shelley, Chairman, Queen's English Society, 3 Manor Crescent, Guildford GU2 6NF
The Queen's English Society is organising a petition to the Secretary of State for Education and Science urging him to include formal grammar in the school curriculum and the new GCSE syllabus.

Some 90 people in industry, the world of letters and the arts, as well as broadcasters and journalists have already signed the petition and support has come from members of the public throughout the country. The Society is still adding names and will do so until the end of October. Anyone who wishes to be included should send their name and address to the Chairman at the above address.

This England

A. G. Dickinson, Midlothian
I sympathise with your correspondent from Gwynedd who suggests a change to 'This UK' because I have lived in Scotland for over 30 years and know exactly how he feels. How about 'This England etc.' as a compromise?

CLASSIFIED ADS: 01-739 1645

HEARTSEARCH

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ALL YOU'VE GOT to lose is your time. Workers — unite! For introductions to thinkers who do, FLORA HANDLEY, Odyssey Bookshop, Lambs Conduit Street, WC1 — 509 2690 — Lively and personal, it's the dating service for individuals. W43.7

CAMBS. SINGLE MALE, graduate, professional, non smoker, with strong sense of humour and wide interests in things cultural and even some sport, wishes to meet woman, intelligent, slim, any age under about 45, for most of the normal reasons. All letters answered, photos returned. Box no. 42/0424. W42.5

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FORTIES FEMALE, S. Yorks, would like intelligent, self-aware male companion to share time, ideas, feelings in almost totally reconstructed life after divorce. Interests: arts, environment. Box no. 43/0448. W43.8

GRADUATE MALE, 32, quiet, caring, sincere, seeks warm intelligent female for intellectually stimulating relationship. Age unimportant. Box no. 43/0460. W43.9

GRADUATE WOMAN teacher, 40's, divorced warm, attractive, seeks professional man for close relationship, interests; walking, travel, music, home-life. London Box no. 42/0432. W42.6

HUMANIST WOMAN, academic pursuits, Greece arts, countryside, young 40, wants caring man similar outlook, age, non-materialistic. Must be able to smile. Box no. 43/0434. W43.10

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PROFESSIONAL WOMAN, young 56, energetic, slim, kind, seeks male companion for hill walking, theatre, outdoor and other leisure pursuits. Midlands area. Box no. 43/0444. W43.13

SMALL, INTELLIGENT, politically active woman (31) with public sector job and well developed sense of humour. Has busy and generally fulfilling life but lacks special friendship/relationship (probably non-sexual) with witty, ideologically sound man. If you fit the bill and, like me, want a friendship that's special but not claustrophobic, my disability won't bother you. Box no. 43/0462. W43.14

WIDOWER, RETIRED PROFESSIONAL, presentable, many interests, attractive, still learning, seeks slimmish female for constructive relationship. Commitment, desire to travel, sail important. Box no. 43/0455. W43.15

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WRITERS/ARTISTS

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BLOOMSBURY THEATRE 01-387 0629. **THE OFF OFF WEST END WEEK. THE VICIOUS BOYS** in **Vicious Roomers,** 8.00 p.m., **THE JOAN COLLINS FAN CLUB** (with **RUSSELL CHURNEY**), 10.30 p.m. 23-24 Oct. Ticket prices all shows £3.50 (concs £2.50). Double bill tickets £5.00 (concs £4.00). 27-30 Oct at 8 p.m. **MIME THEATRE PROJECT** presents **"Thunderbirds F.A.B." Captain Scarlet and The Thunderbirds in a new desperate flight to save the world . . .** Tickets £4.50 (concs £3.00).

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AGENDA

FOR DETAILS CALL COLETTE O'REILLY 01-739 1645

Deadline: 2pm Mondays

FRI 23 OCT

HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION 1956 REMEMBERED. Laying a wreath at the Memorial of the Victims of Yarta at 11 a.m. (Cromwell Gardens, London SW7, opposite Victoria & Albert Museum) Exhibition and Commemoration at 5 p.m. in "Torriano Meeting House" (99 Torriano Avenue, London NW5) — Inconnu Independent Art Group (Budapest) 'Hungarian October' Free press (London).

SAT 24 OCT

SANCTIONS NOW. Anti Apartheid Movement Demonstration. Assemble 12 noon, Embankment, Rally at Hyde Park 3 p.m. Guest speaker **Sam Nujoma, President SWAPO. JOIN US.**

WED 28 OCT

INSTITUTE FOR AFRICAN ALTERNATIVES. Professor O Nnoli from Nigeria will debate with Ben Turok his new book **AFRICA: WHAT CAN BE DONE?** at 6.30 p.m., IFAA, 23 Bevenden Street, London N1 (off East Road), (Old Street Yube, Exit 1).

FRI 30 OCT

SHAW SOCIETY. William Currier on "Bernard Shaw: Drama Critic": at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. Coffee 6.30 p.m. Meeting 7.00 p.m.

WED 28 OCT

Seminar: "ASPECTS OF CHANGING TECHNOLOGY"

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BACKCHAT

INFRA DIG

People in glass houses

Diana Eden

GIVEN THAT IT CAN be argued either that each of us or, equally, none of us is unique, I currently lay claim to being evidence of the former school of thought. How many other people do you know who have been taken for a dirty weekend to *Dachau*?

In his defence, the weekend started out in Munich. So, on Saturday, while he was putting the academic world to rights, I wandered lonely as a crowd into the less-than-academic rites of Munich's annual Oktoberfest.

The Oktoberfest is a two-week celebration of cirrhosis. In one of the six marquees (each giving souse-room to literally thousands of *bier*-by-the-litre-swilling, *lederhosen*-clad, singing, smiling, swaying, whole-chicken-lickin', *absolutely-bloody-legless* revellers) the only missing figure — to my teetotal, saucer eyes — was Cecil B. De Mille cueing the extras. Extras, indeed, were there none. The entire assembled mass were giving cameo performances deserving of an Oscar or, at the very least, life membership of the nearest liver unit.

Theme music was provided by what we — with our quaint old racist charm — call German 'oom-pah' bands.

One avuncular conductor, raised to suitable eminence on a central dais, brought fresh interpretation to the term 'musical arrangement'. Clearly a relaxed old hand, his baton-wielding arm waved full-frontally at the throng and, in an inspiring show of informality and rapture, his other relaxed old hand waved full-frontally down his suede embroidered shorts as he rhythmically adjusted the position of his cock. I had encountered the only person in Franz Joseph Strauss' Brave New Bavaria who was still undecided whether to hang right or left . . .

And then, on Sunday — Dachau.

Munich is but a 20-minute train ride from one of Le Pen's more notorious 'details'. A two-hour visit to the site left me unable to embrace the great man's philosophical dismissal. The old 'administration' block is a museum to imagination-defying inhumanities. One wanders, horrified initially and eventually numb, among photographs and translated texts, all of them the explicit memorabilia of brutality — for the purpose of Dachau is 'Lest We Forget'. (Lest *we* forget, it was the British who patented the first concentration camps, cramming them full of Boers who co-operatively contracted cholera *en masse*.)

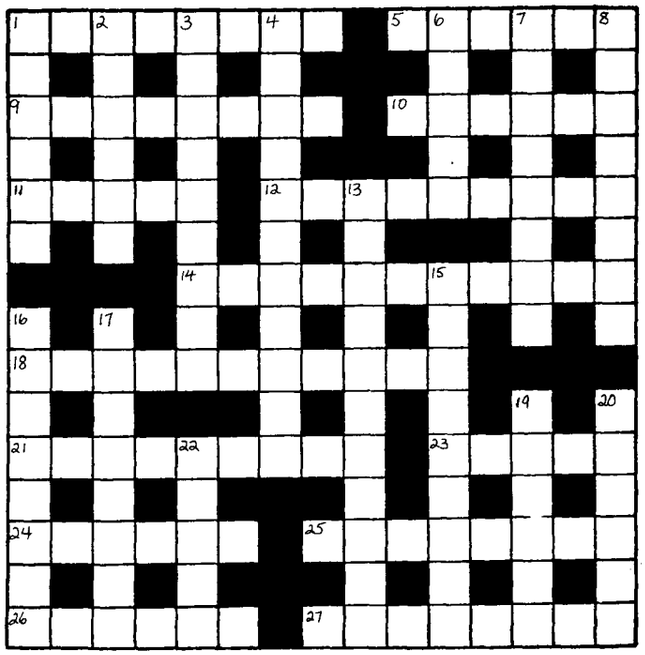
At Dachau, warm autumnal sun sparkled on the compound. Beyond the watchtowers, beyond the reconstructed fence, beyond the enclosure in which 33,000 met their various deaths, pine trees nodded prettily in the breeze. Never having been a stranger to moral or physical cowardice, it is not beyond my shameful understanding that there must have been decent Bavarians who, gazing in from distant fields, chose to see only an orderly and disciplined place of punishment and correction. One can wallow, uneasily but eagerly, in indefinite, self-serving self-delusion.

Until, that is, comtemporary, anguished testiment assails the averted eye. One such, in particular, assaulted me that Sunday: 'THIS IS NOT A PRISON: IT IS SOMETHING OTHER. I WATCH SANE MEN DRIFTING INTO INSANITY, AND NO-ONE HELPS THEM. WE ARE BRANDED AS ANIMALS. NO-ONE HERE RECEIVES HELP.'

I read *that* statement, however, in the original English, as I glanced through the *Observer* on Sunday evening. The writer is an inmate at one of *our* more notorious 'details' — Peterhead Prison, Argyllshire. □

Weekend Crossword 1575

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1575, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by first post 9 November.



Name_____

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ACROSS

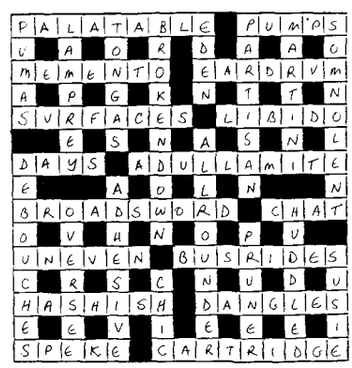
1. Give less than full support to the player (8)
5. One from the chest given back as a prize (6)
9. Country lovers who take a thriller writer to heart (8)
10. A journalist came back without it (6)
11. Now mother has gone the dog is obstinate (5)
12. Personate freely in language (9)
14. Our things we give in Latin for the prophet (11)
18. Lady who makes funny noises on a walk (11)
21. It went with the wrong number (9)
23. Right in front of this tree it would be brighter (5)
24. Agreement of workers about starting a strike (6)
25. The dog I put down is a boxer (8)
26. This entertainer is a scorcher (6)
27. Desperate situation leaving the county without a final word (8)

DOWN

1. Vex when one animal loses its tail to another (6)
2. It is quite clear the devil is in cover (6)
3. Bird gets its fill going about among the grapes (9)
4. Monopolise a bit of rock as something of basic importance (11)
6. Maturer kind of wine (5)
7. Mark writing to show contrasting words (8)
8. Animal which has sleeping place on the river (8)
13. College which provides a home for a college servant (11)
15. A belief in a god without point creates tyranny (9)
16. Lovers who need a wife to start with (8)
17. Bored, but well? (8)
19. The artist gives it one in colour (6)
20. Part of the circle put up for boxes (6)
22. Figure in account put up without initial (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to Crossword 1573



Prizewinners to Crossword 1573

J. Crawford (Farnham, Surrey)
Mrs M. Atkins (Birkenhead, Merseyside)
Billy Kavanagh (Co. Wicklow, Eire)

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FIRST PERSON

Bad case of metroparochialism

Nicholas Murray

'AH, ANOTHER person leaving London,' said a friend as my wife and I announced the end of our 15-year liason with the capital. The thought that we might actually be *going* somewhere hadn't occurred to our condoling friend. Like so many other Londoners, she assumed that life outside the metropolis must be in some way deficient. It was clear to her that we were practising ritual mortification and cutting ourselves off from the mainstream.

I wouldn't want to judge her too harshly for I still recall the day in 1973 when I went up to the *guichet* at Lime Street station Liverpool and, with breathless excitement, put down the price of a single ticket to Euston. Having lived all my life to that point in a small part of the North Liverpool conurbation I was poised, as I saw it, at the threshold of a new experience, re-enacting the familiar progress of the provincial grammar-schoolboy making his assault on the capital.

As it turned out, the walls were not breached and my arrival didn't even flutter the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, but that wasn't the point. It was enough that London was there: a place not so much of opportunity (we weren't yuppies in those days) as of freedom and malleability, a fluid surface on which one could write any message one wanted.

What my Northern friends despised about London — its alleged anonymity and lack of affability — was precisely what I relished. After the closeness of provincial life, the constant, involuntary monitoring of what one was up to, London left one, gloriously, alone. It couldn't care less whether you sank or swam. In that culture of anonymity all sorts of organisms flourished.

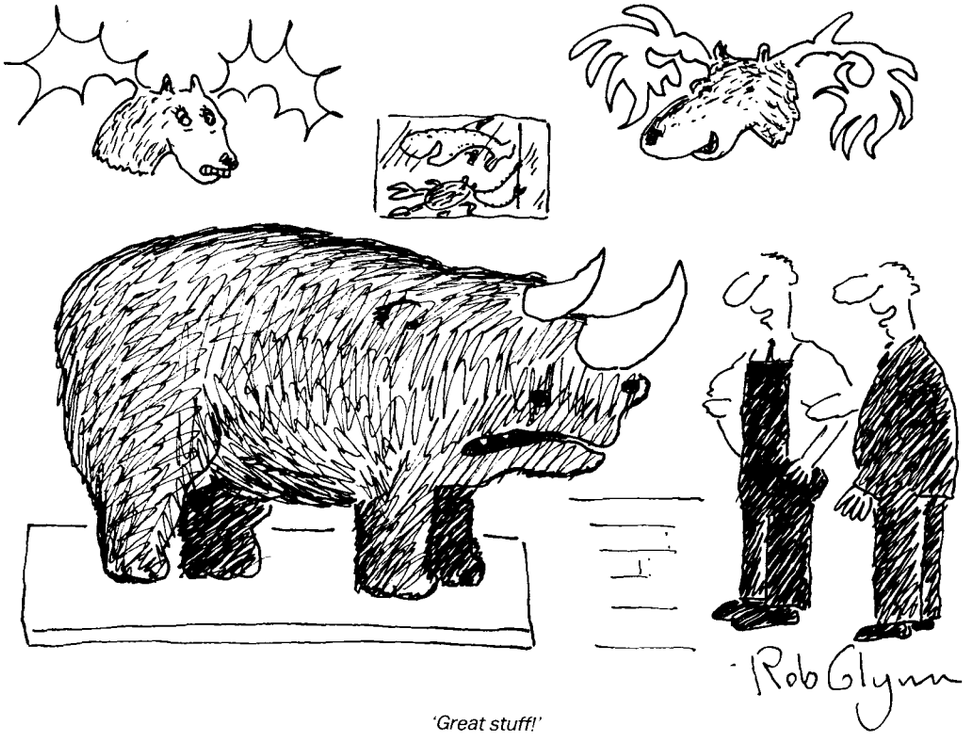
I am sure London still has the same effect and I leave it without rancour and with plenty of regret. What I have discovered, however, is that one metropolitan myth cannot be sustained: the one about capital cities thronging with sophisticates who have transcended provincial littleness and who work on a larger canvas. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Metropolitan parochialism is one of the surprising features of London life that the spotty young graduate counting out the notes at Lime Street could never have predicted. It shows itself in the utter bafflement of someone living in Ealing when confronted with someone from East Ham, or the puzzlement of a Brent bourgeois visiting Bermondsey. What are sometimes called by sociologists (or, more commonly, estate agents) London's villages often appear as impregnable encampments whose inhabitants move along fixed grooves linking a tube station, a workplace, a smattering of pubs or restaurants. They are more likely to speed out of London on the M25 than to cross to the wrong side of the river or to blunder foolishly east of the City, unless it be to visit a colonising yuppie in some glossy Dockland conversion.

I have lost count of the number of times I have heard someone express utter incomprehension or reveal a comically skewed sense of geography when a region beyond the orbital motorway is mentioned. It is not even arrogance, simply a lack of curiosity, a mentality akin to that of the rural labourer who has never strayed beyond the county town for no stronger reason than the fact that it has never occurred to him or her to do so. Strolling through Covent Garden, one spots life forms which might well find it difficult to sustain a nurturing habitat outside those precious Long Acres.

The idea of provincial culture was always a bogus one, of course. Most of the significant contemporary poetry — to take one art form at random — is written outside London and the capital's most vigorous creators have often been immigrants from the putatively benighted margins. (One cannot, however, say the same about the agents and the middle-people, the manipulators and exploiters of talent.) Regional theatre is often ahead of the metropolitan fringe, touring companies flourish and who would pine for Shaftesbury Avenue? But the final deathblow to metropolitan self-regard seems likely to come now from the last few years' inane property price spiral. More people like myself will use it to catapult themselves out of London by cashing in their chips, more will be deterred from leaving the regions in the first place and — I would like to think — a rectification of the current imbalance between centre and periphery (which of course is not the periphery but where the majority of the population live their lives) might occur. New communications technology could play its part, too, in abolishing geographical gaps and impediments.

The North-South divide in jobs, incomes and opportunities will need tougher political action, but, at the level of culture and life-style, I predict a new variousness and a growing willingness to call the capital's bluff. In the meantime, my core curriculum for Londoners would begin with a coach tour of their own island. It might be a revelation. □



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FOOD

Almost free fall

Colin Spencer

FROM THE SEASON of mellow fruitfulness come mushrooms and pumpkins, or squashes as the supermarkets are now calling the latter. They happen to go together very well and more interesting varieties of both are appearing in the shops.

Gourd, pumpkin, marrow and squash are different terms for members of the same large family. Striped and patterned in many hues, they come in a variety of shapes and are now more widely available because of their importance in the spicey cuisines of Britain's ethnic minorities. The family also includes the summer squashes, more familiarly known as melons, gherkins and cucumbers, all of which like a warm climate without frost. The dwarf squash we know and love as courgette, but in fact they all grow in a similar manner, straggling over the ground with the hairy stems which once tripped up Andrew Marvell:

> Stumbling on Melons, as I pass,
> Insnar'd with Flow'rs, I fall on Grass.

The winter squashes which are in the shops now take longer to mature than summer squashes and have hard shells: there are the club shapes — small pumpkins and the butternut — and the snake or bottle gourds, which are long and thin. This last, used in Indian curries, is light green in colour and is not peeled before cooking. The larger pumpkins come in various shapes and sizes; they are often quartered by the store and clingfilmed to ensure you purchase only what you need. They're relatively cheap but weigh heavy, so beware of buying too much. At present pumpkins sell at around 20 pence a pound.

The best mushrooms are those found in the garden or while out on a country walk. Mushroom and fungi collecting is a great pastime in France and Italy, but has only recently gathered bands of devotees over here. You need either a fungi expert to lead the hunt or a couple of reliable guidebooks with detailed and accurate photographs or drawings. The best book is Roger Phillips' *Mushrooms and Other Fungi of Great Britain and Europe* (Pan). I also use *Food For Free* by Richard Mabey and cross-check each specimen of fungi discovered. Over 3,000 species grow on these islands and only about 20 of these are poisonous. Some fungi can be slightly toxic raw but not cooked, so smell specimens when first picked but do not taste them.

The most delicious fungus of all is the giant puffball which grows in woods, fields and under hedges. It can be the size of a football or larger and is creamy white on the outside; if it's any darker it means it's gone beyond its prime. Giant puffballs are sliced and fried in butter or olive oil, with a touch of garlic or chopped onion, and can taste as meaty as a steak. A few years ago I found one in Devon, carved it in slices, fried it in garlic butter and fed 30 literature students, one of whom thought he was eating sweetbreads. My other favourite is the parasol mushroom which grows with a tall, fibrous stem and, in shape and decoration, is evocative of the Brighton Pavilion.

To revert to squashes: the pumpkin is perhaps the Emperor of the family and is generally hollowed out and used for Halloween. But it is worth more than that. The classic pumpkin soup below is amazingly good and is a ravishing Klimt gold in colour, while the smaller butternut squashes have orange flesh and go very well with ginger, mushrooms and garlic as a side vegetable.

Pumpkin Soup
2lb (1kg) pumpkin flesh
1½oz(40g) butter
2pts(1.1l) vegetable stock
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Scoop out all the pumpkin flesh and throw away the seeds. Dice and sauté the flesh in the butter with the seasoning. It will quickly absorb the butter and begin to soften. Add the stock and let the pumpkin simmer on top of the stove for 15 minutes. Allow the mixture to cool, then purée it in a blender. Season to taste. The soup should be smooth, silky and golden in colour.

Squash and Mushroom with Ginger
1lb(450g) butternut squash flesh
½lb(225g) mushrooms, sliced
1oz(25g) ginger root, peeled and grated
5 cloves garlic, sliced
1oz(25g) butter
2 tablespoons olive oil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
Zest and juice of 1 lime

Peel and seed the squash, cut the flesh into chunks, heat the butter and oil together in a pan with the ginger and garlic, throw in the squash and gently sauté the vegetables for 4-5 minutes. Then add the mushrooms and cook for another 4 minutes. Finally add the lime zest and juice, stir then add the seasoning. □

Weekend competition

No 2998 **Set by Gray Dorn**

To coincide with the 70th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, Alan Brien's novel *Lenin* has just been published by Secker and Warburg (£11.95). This huge and gripping book takes the form of entries from Lenin's private diary, from his childhood to 1923. Had the author not been Alan Brien, but instead Jeffrey Archer, Sue Townsend, Jackie Collins or Barbara Cartland, what might the entry for October 1917 be like? Two hundred words maximum please, by Wednesday 4 November. Secker, with true Bolshevik generosity, are offering copies of the novel for the best three entries.

No 2995 **Set by Gray Dorn**

Summaries of British Government policy on the Gulf War, to the tune of 'Rule Britannia', etc.

Report **By Gray Dorn**

It's been a nail-biting three weeks hasn't it? For you, that is; for me it's been more a matter of thumb-twiddling while awaiting formal notification of my appointment as editor of the *NS* (or, as it's soon to become, *The Spark*). My warning that unless entries improved one of my first actions on assuming power would be to dump the comp has caused great consternation, as indeed it was intended to. Old timers rallied round (even E.O. Parrott entered this week — three times, all unsuccessful unfortunately); a senior army officer from Perthshire wrote begging me to reconsider, suggesting that instead we get rid of the 'dreary and indignant complaints' from local councillors which fill our pages. Above all, the entries were of a much higher standard. So you can all relax: for the time being, the comp remains (and yes, I will indeed be excluding the views of local councillors and probably MPs from the magazine: literacy and honesty were never their strong points). Forward to competition number 3,000! And £10 each to this week's winners.

Come throw up, my lads, 'tis for nothing we sail.
Uncle Sam is the dog and we're only the tail.
Newly flagged are our ships, loyal nerds are our men,
And the *Sun* will support them again and again.

Oh the Gulf may be far but the media are near
To push eager tongues up the Leaderene's rear.
So believe what you're told, never question the news;
Just remember the Falklands, rejoice and enthuse.

Though the wogs have the oil we still have British pluck.
We can all wave the flag though we're down on our luck.
And 'a peacekeeping mission' sounds good when it's said
And the outlook is fine if you don't count the dead.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

When Maggie comes marching home again, hurrah, hurrah,
She'll come as a mighty heroine, hurrah, hurrah,
Though nobody knows what the fight was for
And nobody wanted a Middle East war,
When Ron called the tune then Maggie went marching out again,
And when Ron says run then Maggie comes marching home.

Iraq and Iran were a splendid chance, hurrah, hurrah,
For Maggie to fiddle the Middle East dance, hurrah, hurrah,
With a strategy lacking discernible roots
Except for licking America's boots,
And when Ron calls the tune then Maggie goes marching out again,
And when Ron says run then Maggie comes marching home.

ALISON PRINCE

Some talk of Krupps and Bofors, and some of Messerschmitts,
Of Fockers and Sikorskis, and such great nimblewits.
But there's no one to compare, among these fine entrepreneurs,
With a tow row row row row, to the British armourers.

There's nothing in the world like a hi-tech cannonade
To soak up petro-dollars and boost the export trade,
So the first to gulf or tundra when unpleasantness occurs
With a tow row row row row, are the British armourers.

So statesmen wring their hands when these neighbours start to shoot,
But still the guns keep moving, by some clandestine route,
For the client's immaterial, as long as he prefers
With a tow row row row row, row, the British armourers.

NOEL PETTY

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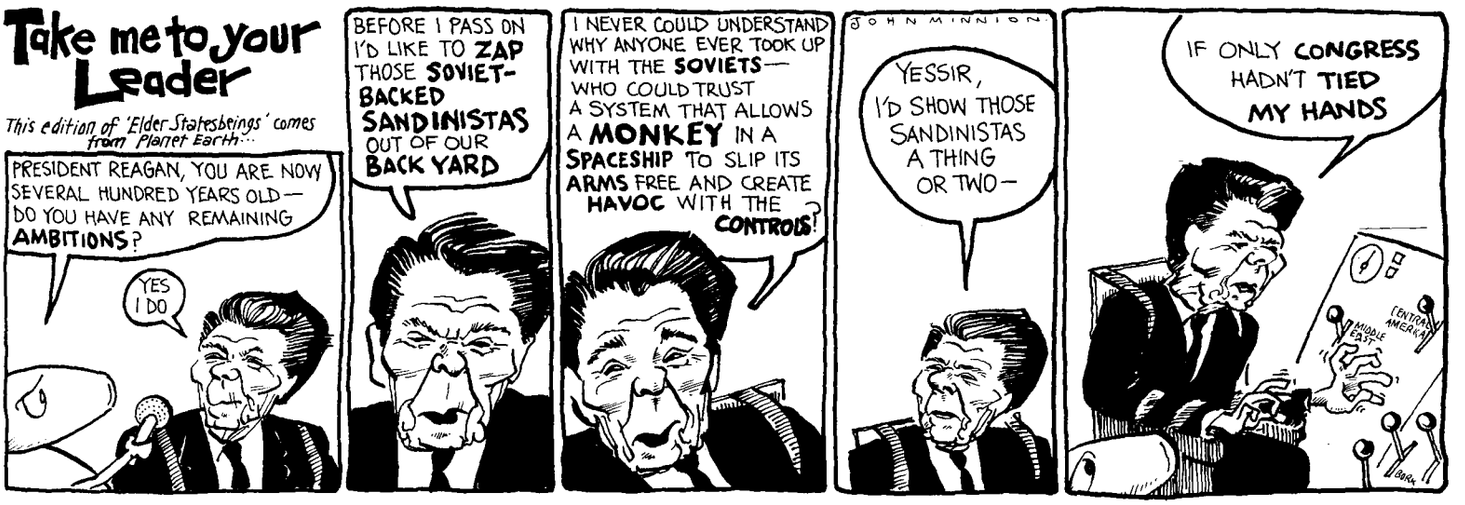

Take me to your Leader
This edition of 'Elder Statesbeings' comes from Planet Earth...
PRESIDENT REAGAN, YOU ARE NOW SEVERAL HUNDRED YEARS OLD— DO YOU HAVE ANY REMAINING AMBITIONS?
YES I DO
BEFORE I PASS ON I'D LIKE TO ZAP THOSE SOVIET-BACKED SANDINISTAS OUT OF OUR BACK YARD
I NEVER COULD UNDERSTAND WHY ANYONE EVER TOOK UP WITH THE SOVIETS— WHO COULD TRUST A SYSTEM THAT ALLOWS A MONKEY IN A SPACESHIP TO SLIP ITS ARMS FREE AND CREATE HAVOC WITH THE CONTROLS?
JOHN MINNION
YESSIR, I'D SHOW THOSE SANDINISTAS A THING OR TWO—
IF ONLY CONGRESS HADN'T TIED MY HANDS
CENTRAL AMERICA
MIDDLE EAST
BARR

Chess

SILLY THINGS these world championship matches, aren't they? Kasparov v Karpov IV may be magnificent, but it isn't chess. The whole point of the gladiatorial circus is to appeal to a wide audience that isn't really interested in the game itself. The format of a lengthy match is adopted almost uniquely for this interface between chess and the media, which shows that it's primarily designed as a PR exercise. There is no good reason for regarding it as a superior test of skill to a tournament grand prix circuit, of the type the Grandmasters' Association are aiming to introduce.

Grumbles like that, however justified, are not going to wean players away from their dreams of the ultimate triumph. What many will regret about the world championship process is that it's such a long road, on which one false step can be fatal. Nunn, for example, is now among the multitude of those who cannot become world champion before 1992. Yet in the Szirak interzonal he showed some of his best form, as in this Sicilicide from round 7:

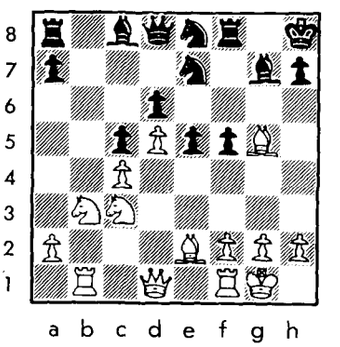
Nunn-Marin (Romania), Szirak 1987. Sicilian Defence.
1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Be3 e6 7. Qd2 b5 8. f3 Nbd7 9. g4 h6 10. 0-0-0 Bb7 11. Bd3 Ne5 12. Rhe1 Nfd7 13. f4 b4 14. Nd5! A new variation on a familiar theme. **Nxd3+ 15. Qxd3 exd5 16. exd5 Be7 17. Nc6 Bxc6 18. dxc6 Nf6?** 18 . . . 0-0 19. cxd7 Qxd7 20. g5 favours White, but not as much as the game! **19. Bb6! Qxb6 20. Rxe7+ Kf8 21. Qxd6 Kg8 22. g5 hxg5 23. fxg5 Rc8 24. c7 Qxd6 25. Rxd6 Ng4 26. Rd8+ Kh7 27. Red7! 1-0.**

In the next round Nunn's opponent was Glenn Flear. The diagram shows the position with White to play after 15 moves of a King's Indian. Before looking at the continuation, can you see a combination? And, more important, how would you assess its consequences?

Nunn has already carried out the strategic advance . . . f7-f5, but the way Black's pieces lag behind the pawns encouraged Flear to launch into a long tactical sequence:

16. Nxc5!? dxc5 17. d6 Nxd6 18. Nd5 Re8 19. Nxe7 Rxe7 20. Qd5 Now Black has to return his material surplus. Counter-sacrificing the exchange with 20 . . . Be6 21. Bxe7 Bxd5 22. Bxd8 Bxc4 23. Bxc4 Nxc4 24. Rfd1 cannot be adequate. **Bb7 21. Rxb7 Nxb7 22. Qxd8 Rxd8 23. Bxe7 Rd2** Has the combination been a success? Material is level for the moment, but the Black Rook is attacking both e2 and a2. Yet the activity of the Rd2 may be premature, since the minor pieces still cannot join in. Instead Nunn could have played 23 . . . Rd7 24. Bg5 e4 followed by . . . Bd4. **24. Bh5 Rxa2 25. g4!** Not only makes a bolt-hole for his King, but also threatens gxf5, f5-6 etc. **f4 26. Rb1 f3** By renewing the danger of a back-rank mate he is able to preserve the Nb7 a little longer. **27. Bf7 e4 28. Bd5 Bd4 29. Bxb7 Bxf2+** 29 . . . Rxf2, otherwise preferable, loses to 30. Bf6+ Kg8 31. Bd5+ and Rb8 mate. **30. Kh1 Kg7 31. Bxe4** Is it really necessary to give up a piece for the passed pawns? I suppose 31. g5 Re2 is rather risky for White. **Re2 32. Bxc5 Bxc5 33. Bxf3 Rf2** So in the end, when the forcing play settles down, the net result is an extra pawn for White. But surely Black should be able to hold the draw, thanks to the opposite-coloured Bishops and his Rook on the 7th rank. **34. Bd5 Kf6 35. Rb7 h6 36. h4 Ke5 37. g5 hxg5 38. hxg5 Kf4?** Here is the false step, a time-trouble blunder. Black's King simply lets the g-pawn slip through. White has no serious hopes of winning after 38 . . . Kf5: e.g., 39. Rg7 Rf4 and the g-pawn falls, or 39. Rc7 Rh2+!, or 39. Rb5 Be3 and White has no useful discovering check (40. Bf7+? Kg4 41. g6? Kg3). **39. g6 Rf1+ 40. Kh2 Rf2+ 41. Bg2 Re2 42. g7 Re8 43. Bd5 Re2+ 44. Kh3 Re3+ 45. Kh4 Re2 46. Rf7+ 1-0.**

With the extra ½ point he could have saved by playing his King to f5, rather than f4, Nunn might have tied for first place with Hjartarson and Salov and proceeded to the candidates' stage, instead of losing the 3-4th place play-off to Portisch. Of course, players can always claim that the result would have been different, if only different moves had been played. But it must be agreed that the margin between being still on course for a tilt at the crown and being knocked out of contention for years can be cruelly narrow.



George Botterill

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This England

£3 Book Tokens for entries printed. (Postcards please.)

☐ Does the Royal couple know, one wonders, that the mock Tudor style is also known to enthusiasts and satirists alike as Joke Oak? — *Daily Telegraph* (Brenda Rowe)

☐ Revivalism is the mode. The disappearing social habits of the working class, like having a job, are being preserved in 'living museums' with the parts of the departed workers being played by their descendents on job creation schemes. — *The Independent* (G. Goatley)

☐ A wheelchair-bound one-legged man was convicted at Snaresbrook Crown Court yesterday of beating up and robbing a shopper in a busy street. — *Daily Telegraph* (G. M. Moger)

☐ *Policeman Ian Thornton roused the* suspicion of his charity event conker rivals when he appeared to be invincible. Then his secret was out — he was said to have injected his conker with superglue. — *Daily Mail* (George Moor)

☐ All this stuff about £1 million pay packets gets a bit embarrassing when you go up to place like Peterlee to do a deal. Don't forget, last year was a one-off and won't happen again. I won't suffer on £300,000 though. I have a very simple lifestyle.' Michael Slade the driving force behind property group Helical Bar, who last year earned £1.1 million. — *The Times* (Leonard Cox)

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A NEW STATESMAN TRAVEL OFFER

A Winter's Weekend in Leningrad

4 DAYS £269

Leningrad and its history have been used by nearly all Russia's great writers as a setting or a theme: Pushkin's '*Onegin*' and '*Bronze Horsemen*', Lermontov's '*Masquerade*', Gogol's '*The Overcoat*' and Dostovavsky's '*Crime and Punishment*'. Palace and quay, boulevard and prospekt, bridge and canal, all have their literary association to some degree worthy of chronicle and nostalgic recollection.

St Petersburg, as the city was originally known, was founded by Peter the Great in 1703 after the capture of the Swedish provinces on the Gulfs of Finland and Riga, and proclaimed the capital in 1708.

Inspired by the Tsar's versatile imagination, which had been greatly struck by his visits to Holland and to the court of Louis XIV at Versailles, the city was laid out on a plan of such splendour that under his successors, Elizabeth and Catherine the Great, St Petersburg was to rival Venice, Amsterdam and the other great cities of the 18th and 19th centuries.

St Petersburg remained the capital of Russia until the revolution. It was here, on the Neva, that the cruiser '*Aurora*' fired the signal to attack on the fateful night of 25th October 1917. In 1924 the city, then known as Petrograd, was renamed Leningrad.

Much of Leningrad has been rebuilt following the devastation of the Second World War and its finest monuments restored to their original splendour. The Russians are justly proud of this feat of town-planning and restoration, for the character of the city has not suffered. Leningrad is still the loveliest, and one of the most interesting of all Soviet cities.

THE ITINERARY

The highlight of our visit to Leningrad will be the Hermitage Museum housed in the Winter Palace and an adjoining building — the New Hermitage. The magnificent collection, founded by Catherine the Great, includes a world famous selection of paintings by European masters of the calibre of Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Van Dyck, Jan Steen and Holbein. It also contains the world's largest collection of French impressionist paintings. Other wonders, include the priceless Scythian treasures of gold artefacts and jewellery.

We shall also visit Rastrelli's masterpiece, the Winter Palace, the Admiralty, the Smolny Monastery, the Fortress and Cathedral of St Peter and St Paul and take a trip outside the city to the magnificent Pushkin Palace.

THE COST OF LIVING

Our weekend break in Leningrad is fully inclusive therefore the only extra items to budget for are drinks and shopping.

YOUR HOTEL

The hotel will be allocated by the official tourist agency, Intourist. Accommodation will be in a comfortable central tourist-class hotel.

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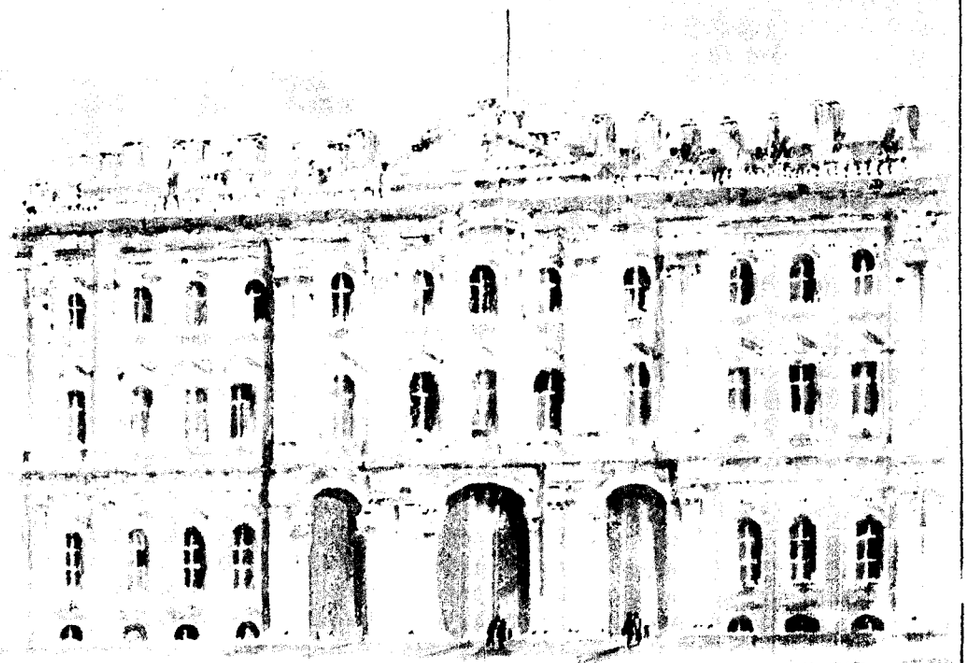

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